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On Holy Scripture and criticism : addresses and sermons

ON HOLY SCRIPTURE & CRITICISM

ADDRESSES AND SERMONS

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BY

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PREFACE

THE Addresses collected in this short volume were delivered before very different audiences at different times during the past fifteen years. They are now reprinted in the hope that they may be acceptable in their present form to some of that large section of our reading and thoughtful public, who believe, like the Author, that the Church's steady progress upon the pathway of reason and truth is capable of being combined with an attitude of unswerving loyalty and reverence towards Holy Scripture.

H. E. W.

FARNHAM CASTLE,
29th August, 1904.

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I

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES[1]

"The holy scriptures"—"The sacred writings" (R.V.)—"which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."—2 TIMOTHY iii. 15.

THE words which I have chosen for my text are appropriate to an occasion upon which the preacher has been invited to advocate the cause of the great British and Foreign Bible Society.

Among the higher privileges which we in England enjoy, and of which, as we look back over the history of the past, we are most justly proud, stands that of the use of the open Bible in the vernacular.

It is difficult for us at the close of the nineteenth century to realise the intensity of the struggle upon which our Reformers entered, in order to obtain the free circulation of the Holy Scriptures in the language of the people. They were men full of zeal, learning,

[1] A sermon preached in Westminster Abbey on May 5, 1895, on the occasion of the 91st Anniversary of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

and wisdom. And there is scarcely any point on which they insist more urgently than this, that the Scriptures should be rendered accessible to all. In the great controversy upon which they were launched, they claimed that every layman should be able to form a judgment as well as any clergyman ; that all should search the Scriptures for themselves, and see there whether things were so or not as they contended.

For their devotion to the cause of bringing Scripture to the people many noble men suffered. And on that famous roll there is no name so justly held in honour in our country, for beauty and holiness of life, for laboriousness and humility and excellence in work, as the name of that great Englishman, William Tyndale, of whom old Foxe, in his *Acts and Monuments*, has truly said, "He might worthily be called an Apostle of England."

Let me relate to you what seems to have been the purpose of William Tyndale's life. He was still a young man when he uttered these words in conversation with a learned controversialist: "If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scripture than thou dost." And shortly before his treacherous capture and cruel death, self-forgetful to the last, he said: "If the king would grant only a bare text of the Scripture to be put forth among his people, be it the translation of what person so-

ever he shall please, I will promise him never to write more."

And now, how great the difference when, through the Bible Society, that "bare text" is distributed in scores of different languages throughout the world!

It has often been sarcastically said that the Reforming Churches, having rejected the tradition of the Catholic Church, erected a rival authority out of Holy Scripture.

But the sarcasm is only applicable to a caricature of the true Churchman. Our Church is built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Head Corner-stone. It lives by the breath of the Holy Spirit. Its one standard of faith and doctrine is the Bible—the Scriptures "that are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

It was because the Bible had become hidden from the people, it was because its teaching had been subordinated to fables and customs and inventions of doubtful origin and recent growth, that the men of the Reformation reasserted the principle of the supremacy of Scripture.

The intensity with which the existing evils were felt is expressed in the vehement language of our First Homily: "Let us diligently search for the well of life in the books of the Old and New Testaments, and not run to . . . men's traditions, devised by men's imaginations, for our justification and salvation."

But the action of our ancestors marked no new departure. It marked but the return to primitive antiquity. In the days of the Apostles, the Scriptures of the Old Testament were in the hands of all; being current in Greek they could be read of all. In the Early Church the Fathers ever appealed to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

"If it is established," says Augustine, "by the clear authority of the divine Scriptures, those I mean that are called Canonical in the Church, it is to be believed without doubt. But other witnesses or testimonies which are used to persuade you to believe anything, you may believe or not, just as you shall see that they have or have not any weight giving them a just claim to your confidence" (*Ad Paulin.* Ep. 147).

It is this attitude which our Church has upheld. It has never shrunk from the appeal to reason or to antiquity, the two God-given aids to the understanding of Holy Scripture. Men like Ridley and Jewel, men like Hooker, Pearson, and Cosin, men like Thirlwall, Wordsworth, and Lightfoot, have made splendid use of their gifts of learning, and of their acquaintance with the early literature of the Church, to support and elucidate Scripture, but not to introduce anything as a substitute for it, not to place anything on the same level with it.

The language of our Article VI. enforces the English position: "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever

is not read therein nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." There is the same thought pervading the Ordinal of our Prayer Book. In the Ordering of Priests, the Bishop asks the Candidates for Ordination: "Will you be diligent in prayer, and in reading of the Holy Scriptures, and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same?" In the Consecration of Bishops, the Archbishop puts the question: "And are you determined out of the same Holy Scriptures to teach or maintain nothing as required of necessity to eternal salvation, but that which you shall be persuaded may be concluded and proved by the same?" All is made to converge upon Scripture as the standard of doctrine and life.

So close stands the Church of England to the famous Protest presented by the German Princes at Spires, in the year 1529, from which the historic name of Protestant is derived.

"Seeing that there is no sure doctrine but such as is conformable to the Word of God; that the Lord forbids the teaching of any other doctrine; that each text of the Holy Scripture ought to be explained by other and clearer texts; and that this Holy Book is, in all things necessary for the Christian, easy of understanding, and calculated to scatter the darkness; we are resolved, by the grace of God, to

maintain the pure and exclusive teaching of this only Word, such as it is contained in the Biblical books of the Old and New Testaments, without adding anything thereto that may be contrary to it. This Word is the only truth; it is the sure rule of all doctrine and of all life, and can never fail or deceive us. He who builds on this foundation shall stand against all the powers of hell, whilst all the human vanities that are set up against it shall fall before it."

My friends, it is a statement of fact, not of controversy, that the great Church of Rome differs from us, as in other matters, so also upon this subject. Her authoritative decrees rank "unwritten traditions," along with the books of Holy Scripture, as to be "received and venerated with equal pious affection." She has decreed the Latin Vulgate to be the one authentic text for the faithful; and has laid down "that he who shall presume to read or to have a Bible without a licence may not receive absolution until he has surrendered the Bible." So recently as in 1864, "Bible Societies" were treated in the *Papal Syllabus of Errors* as one of the pestilences, to be classed with "Socialism, Communism, and secret societies."

Pope Leo XIII., a man whom all respect and regard as a benevolent, learned, and enlightened man, has, as we all know, recently issued a conciliatory address to the English people. He can

hardly, I think, have realised the depth to which this one cleft of difference reaches in the religious life and thought of our country. A free Bible, in the language of the country, without let or licence of priest or bishop,—that we won 300 years ago, and will never relinquish! Scripture, as the one standard of doctrine and teaching in all things affecting man's salvation—that, too, we won 300 years ago, and will never relinquish! The hands of the clock will not move backward. Who is there that would wish England to recede from her heritage?

God grant indeed that there may be more charity, brotherhood, and forbearance, between Christians of different shades of belief!

Yet who, in reading that kindly letter, did not realise at once, that the doctrinal system, which it presupposed, rested upon another standard than that of Scripture only?

Who did not realise something of the gulf between English churchmanship and Roman, if only in that brief sentence of commendation to our country for its "general spirit of respect for the Holy Scriptures"?[1] What could be the meaning of it? For is it not the case, that where the power of Rome seems greatest, there the Bible is all but an unknown book to the people? Why, if England is to be com-

[1] *Times'* Authorised Translation (Sat., April 20, 1895): "Ille reverentiae habitus, quo in divinarum libros Literarum animi fere ducuntur." — *L'Osservatore Romano* (April 22, 23, 1895).

mended for its zeal for Scripture, should the Bible be all but withheld from the Romanist of Italy and Spain? Be the reason what it may, climate, history, association—it denotes a fundamental difference.

This cause of Scripture is one of the many for which our Church, so long as it is loyal to its principles, can make no advances towards reconciliation with unreformed Rome. God knows our weaknesses as a Church; but having fought our way out of many errors and superstitions, we cannot, out of a sentiment for an ideal unity, sacrifice the spiritual freedom to which we have attained.

It is, I am aware, sometimes alleged that the appeal to Holy Scripture has been discredited by modern scholarship, that men's confidence in the Bible has been shaken. Doubtless, it cannot be denied that many a traditional view in this, as in the sixteenth century, has had to be modified in the light of advancing studies. But, except it be under an entire misapprehension, this is no reason for the disturbance of a Christian faith that is rooted and grounded in a personal Saviour.

Our faith rests—not upon opinions, new or old, right or wrong, respecting the literary structure of the Bible—but on the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom the Scriptures testify.

The literary criticism of the Old Testament never touches that eternal message of Scriptures which "are able to make thee wise unto salvation," not

through any magic power which they possess, but, as the Apostle adds, "through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

The message of Divine Love unto the world; the Incarnation of our Saviour; His atoning death upon the Cross; the comfort and hope of the Resurrection—think, my friends, of this Word of God to mankind: then place over against it the literary questions of authorship, style, date, structure, analysis, and the like. Which is the highest? which the essential? which is that which can make thee wise unto salvation?

Think of our Saviour's teaching. Each reference made by Him to the Old Testament has for ever transfigured men's vision of the passage that He cites. Think of the use made of the Hebrew Scriptures by the Apostles in the Acts, or by St. Paul in his Epistles. It is ever the spiritual and moral lesson; ever the teaching which makes wise unto salvation, that they enforce.

Let us, then, not confuse the issues. Full of importance, no doubt, are the questions that have been raised respecting the books. No question affecting Holy Scripture is lightly to be thought of; and any change, or proposed change, in hereditary opinion, even on less important matters, is distressing.

But it is a temptation to let the outward usurp the first place which ought to be given to the inward and the spiritual. Many are ready to dispute

eagerly and hotly about some question of date and authorship, as if these were the all-important matters, while the consideration of the spiritual teaching of the Book or the passage—how Christ would have dealt with it—is pushed into the obscurity of the background. The jewel is more precious than the casket; the Divine message than the human messenger; the inward spiritual grace than the outward visible sign.

The knowledge of the man of science cannot impair the beauty of the rainbow to your senses, because he can explain the material laws of light, and analyse its rays. You can learn the history of the continuous slow and gradual growth of some abbey or cathedral during the ages; the vicissitudes of its structure do not affect the sacred purpose to which it is dedicated.

If you had been ignorant of the history of your Prayer Book, would your sense of its spiritual value, your delight in its devotional use, be impaired, because you learned that some portions of it were derived from the Primitive Church, others from the Sarum Use, others from great reforming divines, others from the time of the Restoration?

Nay, you would say, it is a gift of God to me; its history is interesting, and throws fresh light upon many phrases and expressions. But its abiding power as a book of devotion is the same that it has ever been.

So it is with Holy Scripture. As inspired by the Holy Spirit to convey the Word of God to men's hearts, it is the same now as it was in the days when Christ appealed to the Old Testament in the hour of temptation. It is the same now as when, in the days of Diocletian, the Christians endured the cruellest pains of martyrdom rather than surrender the possession and use of their copies of Holy Scripture.

Permit me to add two parenthetical remarks upon this subject.

1. Let us recognise the liberty of study and interpretation which the Reformed Churches enjoy. The exercise of liberty brings with it its own dangers and difficulties. But we in England need not be afraid of it. In Church, as well as in State, it is the glory of our birthright.

There are those who would shut up Christian studies to what are called "safe lines" of investigation. It is far better to acknowledge that Christian scholarship, in a land where the Bible is read and open to all, will—nay, must—fearlessly turn in all directions, confident, not in itself, but in the guidance of the Holy Spirit; resolutely certain that the truth—not any particular theory of the moment—will be always more helpful than any form of error; and the search for it more healthful than the acquiescence in mere tradition.

Have we freedom? or have we not? Has the

Church ever attempted to bind men's consciences upon matters which none can say are an article of faith? If it had, would it not have erred? would it not, to take one simple instance, have laid it down that the Epistle to the Hebrews was written by St. Paul?

Literary science alters and advances as well as astronomical or mathematical science. It deals with intellectual problems, to which the servants of Christ must devote their powers from age to age, recognising from age to age the continuous dispensation of the Holy Spirit.

But take warning from the sixteenth century. Remember how Erasmus and his companions were assailed with the cry, "Beware of the new learning; avoid novelties." And although the New Learning then, as now, dealt with the external aspect of Scripture, the monks, the advocates of tradition, fought against it, as if it were for life or death, and as Froude says, "By identifying knowledge with heresy, they made orthodoxy synonymous with ignorance."

2. In the second place, there is reason to be thankful: for, from every side, Scripture is being studied. Greater care and diligence are demanded. For more than a century now, these minute studies have been carried on; and, whether the general results be acceptable or not, it becomes increasingly evident that criticism builds again where it has destroyed. And if the human powers of those who

spake moved by the Holy Ghost are now more fully appreciated, the recognition of the Divine order, of the guiding purpose which knits together the infinite variety of the earthly testimony, is demanded even more fully than before by the progress of modern studies.

Yes, and there is yet another reason to be thankful, that men who have found, even in the newer teaching, the means of answering old difficulties, have welcomed the disappearance of clouds that hung over their preconceived ideas of religion, and give Christ the glory for the greater freedom of their souls.

But I have dwelt too long upon this aspect of what is I know to many a painful subject.

Let me return to the practical thought of the greatness of our inheritance in Holy Scripture, and of the use which we make of it.

The Message of God to man is not affected by the studies I have mentioned. The progressive revelation of the Divine purpose of salvation that culminated in Christ—that, after all, is the secret of the power of the Old Testament. How varied the way in which the coming of Christ was prepared for! How the Divine Presence is seen to permeate the most secular narrative! How the words of the prophets burn as they declare the message of God! How the Psalmist speaks to the soul the comfort and the faith which seem to spring from commune

with the Almighty upon the very steps of the heavenly throne! God has revealed Himself not in the abstract sentences of a philosophy, not in the rigid decrees of law; but in the life of a nation and in its varied literature.

Yet, even so, the spirit of the Old Testament is not that of the New. In the books of the New Testament we read and see for ourselves the things which the prophets of old never saw, or could but dimly adumbrate.

There is the manifestation of the Divine Love; *there* is the fulfilment of type and prophecy; *there* the realisation of symbol and of law.

And even there, in those writings which contain the fulness of the Divine Message, we recognise the limitations of the human element. How much more may we not expect to see in the writings of the older covenant a proportionate degree of human limitation!

Writings which were called forth by the needs of the moment or the age, were through God's grace prepared that they might become "a perpetual fountain of light." In the letter and in the outward form, the varied nature of the books corresponds to the conditions under which they were composed.

But the verities which they have conveyed to the hearts of men are incapable of change. They abide. They are eternal. They are the Divine Word. No human mind can exhaust them. All can explore

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them: none too humble, none too simple. What is there in the libraries of the world's wisdom that like them can minister to the broken-hearted? that like them can refresh the weary? that like them can strengthen the dying?

"There are gifts of comfort and of hope in Holy Scripture for all that will seek for them, for all that feel their need of them."

However wide may be the modern use and enjoyment of Holy Scripture, it might well be extended and increased in our midst, for the spiritual quickening of our religious life. No books about the Bible can take the place of the Bible itself! No manual of devotion is a substitute for the message of the Inspired Word! Universal is the testimony of the saints of Christendom in every age to the duty of studying the Word. Not a mechanical duty; not a superstitious fetish—but as a continual form of worship, the approach, as it were, not to the letter, but to the mind and spirit of God, as they have been revealed to our earthly capacities, under the teaching and through the instrumentality of human writings.

"Yes," as we remember Canon Liddon saying in a sermon twenty years ago, "yes; those who will may find in Holy Scripture patience, consolation, hope. Not in the literary or historical features, but in the great truths which it reveals about God, about our Incarnate Lord, about man;

in the great examples it holds forth of patience and of victory; in the great promises it repeats; in the future which it unfolds to the eye of faith—is this treasure to be found.

"To use St. Augustine's phrase, 'Scripture is a long letter sent to us from our heavenly country'; and we who hope in time to reach its shores should learn what we can about it, and about the conditions of reaching it, while we may."

That which is our priceless treasure let us freely give to others. The work and position of our country among the nations of the world give us unique opportunities for distributing it to other lands.

Let not familiarity with our inheritance in Scripture deaden our apprehension of the needs of others!

No society, no institution in the world, can rival the position which the Bible Society has taken up. To distribute the Bible to the world is its work. In this last year alone, nearly four millions of Bibles, Testaments, and portions of Scripture were disseminated by its agents. Its work of translating supplements the labours of the missionary in every quarter of the globe. In this year's Report alone the reference to the work of this Society in the spread of the Holy Scriptures in Armenia, in China, in Uganda, in India—is a pledge of its apostolic zeal and simplicity.

Let not others starve while you are in the midst of plenty! You lack not opportunity. Communicate generously this gift of the Word of Life to those who are hungering and thirsting for it—the gift of "the sacred writings that are able to make men wise unto salvation."

II

CRITICISMS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE AND THE CHURCH'S GAINS THEREBY[1]

For one reason or another, which I need not here particularise, the subject of Old Testament Criticism, to which I am requested to confine the present paper, has recently attracted especial attention. There is the more need, therefore, of approaching it in a spirit of meekness and reverence. There is the more need of prayer, that the interests of Christian truth, and not the cause of one opinion or another, may be promoted by discussion; above all, that Holy Scripture may, with every increase of our knowledge, be more fully recognised by the Church as the embodiment of Divine Revelation, and as the only complete Rule of Faith and Doctrine.

Men ask for clear and candid statements of what seems to be truth, in regard to the books of the Old Testament. They are impatient, and rightly so,

[1] A Paper read at the Church Congress, Rhyl, 1891.

of any attempt to "protect" Holy Scripture from methods of criticism applied to other literature. They will not tolerate anything like a return to that mockery of interpretation which was determined at all costs to harmonise every variation and to overleap every obstacle.

Men ask for candour; but they have the right instinct, also, which demands complete reverence. Men ask for plainness of speech; but they have the right instinct, also, which turns in disgust from the terms of patronage on the one side, of condemnation on the other, in which Scripture is sometimes referred to in the present day.

They think they have good reason to expect a "juster statement of truth" respecting the books of the Old Testament from modern study. For, undoubtedly the present generation is endowed, in a peculiar degree, with privileges and gifts, that should enable it to fulfil the duty of fearless investigation with more thoroughness than has ever before been possible.

A far superior knowledge of the Semitic languages in general, and of the Hebrew language in particular; a far more extensive acquaintance with the history, the religion, and the institutions of the great Semitic powers of Assyria and Babylonia, of Phœnicia and Arabia; a great expansion of knowledge through the comparative study of religion; the skilful exercise of the more scientific methods of historical

and of textual criticism which the scholarship of the last thirty years has perfected into weapons of unrivalled precision; such are some of the new forces which, having been applied to Biblical exegesis, have produced an alteration in study comparable perhaps only to the revolution effected by the employment of steam and electricity in investigations and pursuits of a very different order. It would be strange, indeed, if the application of modern methods and the use of new tools did not lead men to expect a modification of some opinions, or, at least, of those that rested on the inadequate basis of untrustworthy tradition or popular assumption.

In some quarters, of course, the advance of new opinions will always be welcomed with inconsiderate rashness; in others, retarded by ill-concealed prejudice. But the advance of new or of modified opinion, if slow, has been very steady. The points on which the best scholars now differ from one another, are trifling and minute in comparison with those on which they are agreed.

It is to the points on which there seems to be so general an agreement on the part of the best scholars, that I propose to direct attention in the present paper.

The conclusions to which we seem to have been brought by the continuous critical study of the Old Testament throughout this century, I propose, for convenience sake, to group under three heads, (1) the

structure of the books, (2) the human origin of their contents, and (3) the recognition of their authority. In other words, we consider the "juster statement of truth," as it is derived from the application of modern methods of study to (1) the manner of the composition of the books, (2) the character of their contents, and (3) the history of their admission into the Canon.

1. It is under the first head,[1] that of the literary structure, that some of the most startling results have been obtained. Not so very long ago the theory that the Pentateuch consisted of distinct component elements was objected to on the ground that the very improbability of a phenomenon so unique in literature afforded a strong presumption against its correctness. Since that time, the whole aspect of the question has changed. The composite structure of the narrative books is now recognised to be the rule, and not the exception, in the Old Testament. All the narrative books, from Genesis to Chronicles, and several of the prophetical, notably Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah, and Zechariah, are pronounced to owe their literary form to the process of compilation. This is no hasty theory, but the

[1] Professor Driver's new work, *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (T. and T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1891), deals especially with this subject. It is a masterpiece of condensation. For its profound learning, its perfect reverence of tone, its sober and dispassionate reasoning, it may confidently be recommended as the best book on Old Testament criticism that has appeared in English. [This book is now (1904) a standard work in its 7th edition.]

conclusion slowly arrived at by the minute observation of phenomena, which, to use Professor Driver's words, "constitute a cumulative argument incompatible with the unity of authorship of the books in which they are observed" (*Cont. Rev.*, Feb. 1890).

Now we ask ourselves, what does the frank recognition of the extensive presence of compilation imply? Does it essentially alter our view of Holy Scripture?

It does not appear to me to do more than bring into comparatively clear light the manner of the composition of the books, concerning which we previously were in utter darkness.

Negatively, we learn, at least, how the books were *not* composed, neither mechanically, nor continuously, nor without conscious intellectual effort.

Positively, we learn two things, as to how they *were* composed: (1) that their present structure is the result of long and laborious human effort, and (2) that it answers to a definite purpose in the mind of the compiler. 1. It is the result of long and laborious human effort. For their composite shape has only been reached by complex processes, which, from first to last, must represent a period of many centuries, the process of collecting materials from different sources, the process of sifting them, choosing here and rejecting there, the process of welding them together, of editing them, of expanding, altering, and inserting in accordance with

the purpose of the compilation. 2. It answers to a definite purpose in the mind of the compiler. The composite structure testifies to the unity of plan. Every careful reader can detect the presence of a plan in every book of Scripture viewed as a literary whole ; he will see it yet more clearly in the use which has been made of a great variety of materials. It will account, in the narrative books, for the fact that we find a selection of epoch-making incidents and special periods in the religious life of the people, instead of any attempt to give a continuous and uniform chronicle of their political career. It will account, in the prophetical books, for a somewhat similar phenomenon. They have no appearance of being an exhaustive collection of Hebrew prophecy, nor are their contents arranged in a strictly chronological order. The writings have been selected and grouped together in conformity with the one supreme purpose of their compilation, that of appealing most directly to the heart and conscience of the people.

2. Turning now to the second division of our subject, the human (as distinct from the Divine) origin and character of the contents of the books, it will be evident that in many instances the recognition of their composite structure throws much light upon it. For it is seen that, humanly speaking, their origin is not separable from that of the national literature generally ; that the

sacred books comprise material borrowed, often wholesale, from the most miscellaneous sources; that in their variety they correspond to the whole range of Hebrew literature. Primitive tradition, codes of law, official chronicles, prophetic utterances, oral tradition, formal history, religious poetry, practical maxims, philosophical speculation, apocalyptic vision, all are represented in the writings of the Old Testament.

As literature, they must, of course, be judged by the ordinary standards of literary criticism. The results of recent investigation illustrate the extraordinary variety of their merely human origin. They warn us against assuming (save where a special revelation is recorded) that the various materials, thus incorporated in the books of Scripture, were elevated either in historical accuracy or in scientific conception above the intellectual standard of their day. In other words, it would appear that the Revelation, of which they were the appointed channel, did not, in any new and supernatural way, communicate a knowledge of facts that were ascertainable by human powers, but conveyed, through the medium of Israelite literature, Divine teaching concerning God and man and the appointed way of salvation from the dominion of sin. The letter was the means by which the spirit could be apprehended; but it was the spirit and not the letter that conveyed the quickening life. And yet the

letter itself was purified and consecrated for the purpose of conveying the message of Jehovah.

Two or three examples will serve to illustrate my meaning.

(*a*) The Story of the Creation, as illustrated by Assyrian and Babylonian discoveries, is now seen to be the Hebrew version of one of the primitive legends common to the Semitic races, as much on a level with them, indeed, in their imperfect standard of physical science as infinitely superior to them in religious teaching, in purity and holiness, in freedom from the grotesque features which disfigure the other versions. The teaching is the teaching of the Spirit; the narrative a purified form of a Semitic legend.

(*b*) The ceremonial laws of the Pentateuch are now known to have close affinity with the regulations for worship and cleanliness observed by Assyrians and Babylonians, by Phœnicians and the early Arabians. Long before the days of Moses many of the rules now embodied in the Pentateuch must have been observed by his Hebrew forefathers in the land where Abraham received his divine call. The laws of the Mosaic legislation and those added at a later time sanctioned national customs, but did not in the majority of instances originate them. The Revelation, that is to say, lay not in the externals of the ritual, but in the spiritual teaching which they symbolised, the holiness of the covenant relation, the need of the

perfect sacrifice, and the promise of complete atonement.

(*c*) To take a very different instance, the book of Job is declared by scholars to have been composed at the period of the exile, and to be an imaginative work based on a Hebrew story respecting the patriarch and his misfortunes. Yet who would say that this account of its literary origin impairs the power or reduces the value of its religious teaching?

The verdict of literary criticism must be accepted with absolute impartiality. And if, as criticism may tell us, the books of Chronicles are, in some details, irreconcileable, upon any candid principle of interpretation, with the books of Samuel and Kings, if, again, the book of Esther prove to be in the main unhistorical, we shrink not from resolutely accepting results which affect our view of the literary history of the books. Our faith need not waver in the spiritual teaching, which, through works of imagination as well as of reason, by tradition as well as by chronicle, was ordained for the training of the Jewish and the teaching of the Christian Church. We may be sure of this, that in the Scripture of that nation, which out of all the nations in the world was chosen to be the one from which the Son of God should come, everything is good and "nothing to be rejected, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is

sanctified through the word of God and prayer" (1 Tim. iv. 4).

3. Lastly, a juster statement of truth is put forward respecting the formation of the Old Testament Canon. It is now recognised that there is no ground for supposing the books to have been regarded as sacred from the time of their composition, nor even for supposing that they were composed for the purpose of contributing to form an authoritative Canon. The History of the Canon of the Old Testament presents, in many respects, resemblances to the History of the Canon of the New Testament which are even more striking than the features of their difference. It was formed not by a single person, like Ezra, nor by a single generation; but by slow and gradual growth, in conformity with the religious needs of the Jewish Church; first the Law, corresponding to the Gospels; then the Prophets, historical and prophetical, added like the Acts of the Apostles and the Pauline Epistles; finally, the Psalms and the remainder of the so-called Hagiographa, appended, as a miscellaneous group in which were certain writings like Ecclesiastes, Esther, and Song of Solomon, whose authority was as much questioned as that of the disputed Epistles in the History of the New Testament Canon.

There is no time now to enlarge upon this

aspect of our subject. But the point, to which attention is especially called, is this, that the admission of the various books of the Old Testament into the sacred canon was determined by no outward supernatural manifestation, but by the declaration of the Spirit made known through the needs and demands of the Church. The books that, at first probably, were studied for purposes of private religious edification, were then separated for public use from all other writings, and finally declared, on the warrant of their spiritual power, to be worthy of a place above all books, as "the Writings," "the Holy Scriptures," "the Word of God."

Under each head, therefore, which we have considered, the structure of the books, their human (as distinct from their divine) origin, and their canonicity, modern studies have supplied us with a "juster statement of truth." The result is perhaps at first somewhat disenchanting. We seem to have passed out of that charmed atmosphere of happy and holy fancy respecting the structure, origin, and recognition of Scripture, in which imagination first took advantage of our want of exact knowledge, and then peopled the vacant region with creations of our own desire.

We are tempted to seek for an outward sign of the presence of the Kingdom of God. But it will never be discerned, save in answer to the prayer

of faith that the eyes of our spiritual vision may be opened. The fuller recognition of the human handiwork in no way detracts from the spiritual conception of Divine Inspiration in the case of the Old Testament any more than in that of the New. The more complete understanding of the human nature of our blessed Lord does not diminish our belief in His Divinity. The more complete understanding of the personal character and local surroundings of the Apostles does not diminish our belief in the inspired nature of the message which they preached.

It will always be the case; if we rest content with matters of merely external interest, loss and not gain will seem to result from the juster statement of truth. Our clear conception of Inspiration fades, in proportion as we look for it as some magical mark to be recognised by all on the surface of the structure, instead of searching for it in the teaching of the Spirit. The latter is the harder task; but it is the one to which we are led by every analogy of our Christian life. The recognition of the truly sacramental character of Scripture enables us to perceive the presence of its spiritual power as well as the beauty of its outward form.

To conclude, we may find for the books of the Old Testament, according to the juster statement of facts relating to them, an instructive analogy in the sacred office of the ministry. Influences which the

world regards as purely human, at home, at school, and college, have helped to form the character, to mould and educate the powers of one who is destined to be the means of unspeakable blessing, it may be, to hundreds of his fellow-creatures. The purpose of his life, the dedication of it to a sacred vocation, result, in the judgment of the world, from the formation of a merely human resolve. Finally, that which appears to the world a merely human, outward function sets him apart from other men, and confers on him the right of fulfilling a sacred duty. Yes, to the outward vision, the human element is everywhere conspicuous, the human influences of education and discipline, human purposes in the decisive determination of a career, human authority in the official ratification of it.

And yet, which of us believes not that at every stage the true minister of Christ has been guided and overruled by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit? It was that power, we believe, which directed the gradual education of the spiritual man, which hallowed his choice and overruled his resolve, which finally made efficacious the seal of authoritative delegation committed to him.

Imperfect this, as all analogies are. And yet it may be helpful, if the teaching of it be transferred to the sphere of Holy Scripture; if it warn us at least not to attempt to draw too closely the line of demarcation between that which is divine and

that which is human in the realm of a spiritual dispensation; if it teach us not to expect solely a visible sign of the supernatural presence in a revelation of which the Great Master is one who is Perfect Man as well as Perfect God.

We look upward from earth to heaven. We argue from the known to the unknown. Faith leaps from the sight of the nail prints to the confession of the Divinity.

And as we look on the human record of Scripture, the eye of faith discerns its Divine Message.

Each "juster statement of truth" bids us take higher and holier ground, bids us see in the Inspiration of the Spirit the breath of life infused into—and not an outward vesture separable from—the earthly form.

According to the riches of the knowledge that have been given us in Christ, may we learn, with each juster statement of the outward verities, more and more of the heavenly language, in which the Spirit has written to the Churches through the words of Holy Scripture!

III

OLD TESTAMENT CRITICISM IN ITS BEARING ON TEACHING[1]

It is a matter of congratulation that our subject is thus to be discussed in a practical form.

Criticism as the department of Biblical Interpretation which deals with the language, the text, the literary history, the origin and structure of the Books, has been industriously prosecuted for the last century and a half. Like every other science, it has had wild and crude notions put forward in its name. But like every other science pursued without dogmatic prejudice, on lines of inductive study, it has steadily won its way towards a better knowledge of the truth, and a more skilled observation of literary and historical facts.

Let us first quite roughly realise the new position.

The traditional views as to the authorships of books have been for the most part abandoned. It

[1] A paper read at the Church Congress, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, September 1900.

is now recognised (as Professor Margoliouth has pointed out in his learned article on "the Language of the Old Testament" in Hastings' most useful and excellent *Dictionary of the Bible*) that "the greater portion of the Old Testament does not consist of works produced by single individuals, embodying their own ideas in their own language, but of the work of schools or societies, who compiled, abridged, and edited. The main streams have perhaps been separated by critics with success; but each of these main streams is made up of a variety of smaller rills, so to speak, which cannot be localised." It is obvious that the recognition of the methods of ancient Oriental authorship must modify our ideas of the manner in which the sacred books received their shape. What we have to consider is how this advance in our knowledge is going to affect our teaching of Holy Scripture.

In teaching the results of any progressive science, we have no business to obtrude into our general instruction either bewildering technical minutiæ or doubtful, disturbing speculations. We are bound, in our elementary teaching, to restrict ourselves to the main outline of results and the main principles of inquiry: and to these I refer to-day.

1. Criticism will influence teaching concerning the Inspiration of Holy Scripture. We learn to be at once more simple and more courageous. The methods of composition being for the most part

ascertained, there is no longer room for the traditional vague supposition that the writers obtained their materials in a supernatural way while in a state of spiritual trance or ecstasy. St. Luke speaks in his Prologue of his labours in collecting the materials for his Gospel. Even so the compilers of the Old Testament books derived their materials by human industry from human sources. The inspiration of the books consists in no imaginary method of communication, but in that spiritual force which has made them God's word to men's hearts.

Our blessed Lord — in whom the Godhead was revealed bodily — appeared to earthly vision as simply man. The writings, which formed a partial but preparatory Revelation, have been shown by criticism to be in their outward form and composition entirely human. We cannot, therefore, say when we teach, "this part is inspired, and this is not." We can only say, God has made Himself known by means of these writings; these have been the chosen channel of His revelation; they have been His witnesses; they have spiritually lived and borne fruit after a manner that the sacred writings neither of Babylon nor Egypt, Greece nor Rome, can claim to have done in the spiritual history of the world.

2. Criticism will strengthen the teaching of Christian Apologetics. We are all familiar with the old method of attack upon Scripture: if Scripture be inspired, it can contain no flaw or contradiction,

nothing contrary to science or history; but the Old Testament contains such things; therefore it is not inspired, and can make no claim to be.

It would be impossible to say how many simple folk have had their faith shaken or upset by this line of reasoning. It would be melancholy work to recall the strange and not always straightforward endeavours to explain, or explain away, the alleged discrepancies and erroneous statements.

Christian criticism has taken a different line. It frankly teaches the possibility of imperfections of treatment arising from the limitations of knowledge in a human writer, and from old-world methods of composition of which we have now indubitable proofs. The Old Testament conception of the universe, of astronomy, geology, and other regions of human science, reflects the common beliefs of the age and country; it claims no supernatural anticipation of knowledge.

As to the credibility of the events narrated, they must be judged by the ordinary laws of historical evidence. The historical character of our Lord's Resurrection is defended by us on such grounds, on the evidence of the contemporary Gospel writers, on the evidence of the effect produced upon the Apostles, on the evidence of St. Paul's Epistles, on the evidence of primitive Christian teaching, on the evidence of the institutions of the Church. It is not enough in these days to say that we accept a fact because it is

recorded. The Reason of man asks for proof. And it is obvious that in the literature of the Old Testament, covering a range of nine or ten centuries, the chance of obtaining convincing evidence cannot be expected in the same degree as in the literature of the first Christian century.

Criticism therefore requires us in our teaching to bear in mind the variety of sources from which the narratives are drawn, and to acknowledge our inability to say for certain whether some recorded event be a literal fact, or only founded upon fact, or a popular story, or an allegorical picture based on early narrative. Time and further inquiry may decide: teacher and learner can afford to wait.

The ordinary reader likes to regard everything as literal fact: and he is quite at liberty to do so. But he has no right to denounce or reproach for faithlessness to Christianity his brother who considers that the general evidence is in favour of the story of Jonah being allegorical, that of Esther being an unhistorical patriotic tale, that of Job a dramatic poem. Christianity is not injured by this liberty of interpretation. It is relieved from a great reproach by the charity of a larger freedom in the work of teaching.

It only requires criticism on a very small scale to discern that the books are unequal in quality and value. Their extraordinary variety in subject-matter and character teaches the comprehensive

view of national spiritual life through which in its varied aspects the love and goodness of God revealed itself. We are conscious of the lower morality in imprecatory psalms, in the law of retaliation, and in the externalism of worship; nor can we disguise the facts.

Our Lord Himself, though He laid the benediction of His express appeal and sanction upon the Jewish Scriptures, emphatically proclaimed a higher standard of moral and spiritual life than that of the Old Testament: the Apostles proclaimed that the worship of the Temple and the dispensation of the law were imperfect and temporary. Here was criticism, a pattern of Christian freedom. It should be our guide.

If in the loftier region of morals and religious life we have this assurance as to the inferior standard represented by the Old Testament books, we need have no hesitation in teaching the presence of analogous imperfection in the lower plane of science, history, and literature.

3. Criticism has impressed upon us a fact which has too often been overlooked in teaching, *i.e.* that the books of the Old Testament were written primarily for the religious training of Israel. The tendency has been to treat them too exclusively as storehouses of facts, and to require a mechanical acquaintance with these facts rather than the intelligent understanding of their spirit and purpose.

The knowledge of the contents of the books must of course be insisted on. But by itself it is not necessarily a sacred possession; mere facts in themselves will not convey spiritual advantage. It is the significance and the lesson underlying the narrative that the writers sought to communicate. The writings will not become truly sacred unless their purpose and meaning are spiritually discerned. Our Lord's use of the Jewish Scriptures is here our sublimest pattern.

For instance, the patriarchal narratives throw light undoubtedly upon the nomad life of the early Israelites; but if we look for mere history, we have gained from the Tell-el-Amarna tablets more insight into the condition of Canaan during the Patriarchal age than from many chapters of Genesis. And yet, there is much more in them than mere story: what is there to compare with that matchless series of simple scenes, so true to nature, so rich in moral beauty, so matchless in purity of pathos, so descriptive in symbolism of the Divine election and of spiritual discipline?

We read the stories of Ahab and Jehu, of Manasseh and Josiah. And yet from the mere narrative we remain in ignorance of the foreign relations, the larger history, of the Israelite kingdoms. The cuneiform inscriptions have thrown far more abundant light upon the external history of the people. The prophets interpret the inner condition

of the country. But the sacred narrative, so far from presenting complete history, is partial and fragmentary, and furnishes us with a series of scenes selected for a purpose of religious and ethical instruction and edited with that end in view.

4. Criticism has revealed, for all aspects of teaching, the essential value of the Prophets. Only in our day has their work been appreciated. For centuries they have been ignored as mysterious oracles, honoured and valued merely for the precious texts and sayings which sparkled like rare and brilliant gems upon the dim, obscure surface of an unexplored literature. Modern scholarship has laid bare their intimate relation to the political and social problems of the day. In Amos and Micah and Hosea we can now listen to the passionate pleadings of prophet preachers and social reformers with their countrymen. Who that would be a student of the Old Testament can now find a nobler field for study, or a better lesson for teaching, than the successive periods of history illumined by Hosea and Amos, by Micah and Isaiah, by Zephaniah, Habakkuk, and Jeremiah, by Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi? There has been no more helpful, no more stimulating exegetical work done by modern critical scholars than the treatment of the prophets by Driver, George Adam Smith, Kirkpatrick, and Ottley. The books so long shunned and avoided are seen to burn with living fire: and the servant of God is impelled as it

were by this new appearance to draw nearer and see this great sight. The dulness has gone from these names: they live once more for modern difficulties, political and social.

5. Criticism has thus not expended itself upon the more arid and minute analysis of the literary structure. Such necessary studies belong to the advanced investigations of literary science; they have no place in the general teaching of the Old Testament. But criticism has rendered a universal service by its systematic treatment of Old Testament theology. It has enabled us to discern in the successive periods of Old Testament literature the steady growth of spiritual light. In the conception of the Nature and Being of the God of Israel, in the idea of Holiness, in the realisation of personal responsibility, in the anticipation of a Messianic Redeemer, in the forecast of a future life, in these and similar subjects we can now teach, through the agency of critical interpretation, how the Spirit of God has brought about a continuous evolution of spiritual thought. There is, therefore, another side to the startling assertion of criticism that, to start with, the Israelite people, to all outward appearance, "began with nothing which other nations did not have." Yes: other Semitic nations round about worshipped their own gods with similar titles, with similar rites and practically identical customs of sacrifice, purification, and priestly usage. But the

Israelite religion did not evaporate like smoke, as did the religion of Edom and Moab and Ammon. It rose, it gathered strength and purity; it inspired, upheld the race in its day of overthrow; it transformed the remnant of Israel into an undying church. The religion of Jehovah survived the religions of Athens and Rome.

The Divine Spirit alone explains the secret of this power and the mystery of this growth. Christian critics can teach the presence of that Spirit of Divine Revelation whose pathway they have learned to trace in an ever-ascending scale, until it becomes merged in the manifestation of our Divine Lord.

I am sure, with the conviction of many years' teaching, that the teaching of the Old Testament upon such lines infuses fresh life and interest into the study of the sacred Books. We may deplore the loss of old traditions as to the origin and structure of the books: we may be staggered at realising how plain and unvarnished is the rough human element of their composition, which criticism has exposed to view.

But we may rest assured that moral courage will not be unrewarded in the endeavour to make clear the lessons of Biblical criticism. "Any criticism of the human element in the Bible," says Mr. Illingworth, in words which many will recall (*Personality*, p. 186), "which makes it more truly human, more analogous with the workings of the human spirit

otherwhere, tends without question to enhance our sense of its reality and worth." . . . "Spiritual truths are always immeasurably greater than their vehicles of utterance." . . . "The power of the Bible over the peasant is not diminished by his ignorance, nor its power over the scholar increased by his knowledge; for it is independent of the region in which ignorance and knowledge disagree. It flashes on the soul through distorted or through clear conceptions; and in either case with equal ease. . . . And this power in the Bible, which its believers attribute to inspiration, is a phenomenon that cannot otherwise be easily explained."

IV

THE OLD TESTAMENT IN TEACHING AND PREACHING, AS AFFECTED BY THE MORE ASSURED RESULTS OF RESEARCH[1]

My subject is "The Old Testament in teaching and preaching, as affected by the more assured results of research." In this title distinction is rightly drawn between the work of the teacher and the work of the preacher. Often happily, sometimes unhappily blended, their special functions are not absolutely identical. The teacher can spoil his work by preaching; the preacher improve his by teaching.

On the present occasion, we leave on one side disputable problems. We assume that certain results of research in Old Testament study have been unquestionably attained. What is to be their effect upon the duties of preacher and teacher? I will take the preacher first. The assured results are

[1] A paper read at the Bristol Church Congress, Thursday, October 15, 1903.

of a literary and historical character. They are not subjects which the preacher ordinarily, or even necessarily, handles. The sermon is not a literary lecture. Undoubtedly, the preacher must be, is called to be, above all things a student of the Word of God: and by all means let him be intensely interested in its literary aspects; yes, let him become fascinated by archæological inquiry, by Assyrian and Egyptian researches, by literary criticism. It will all help, when studied in due proportion, to widen the human interest and to cultivate the intellectual powers.

But the pulpit is not the lecturer's desk. The preacher is set apart to preach the Word of God; and though all truth is comprehended in that phrase, he is primarily the preacher of a spiritual message. He declares the Gospel of Jesus Christ. His first duty is concerned with the words of Eternal Life.

Nevertheless, his sermon on the Old Testament ought to be based on sound interpretation. The scholarly knowledge of the text is an indispensable aid for any departure from the beaten path of homiletic discourse. The scientific data of his exegesis are out of place in the sermon itself. They should remain below the surface—a solid substructure—not obtruded upon the view. Literary explanations, or historical prefaces, attempted for the purpose of illuminating the situation represented in the text or of deepening the human interest, need

to be simple, vivid, and constructive—not complicated, not controversial, not merely negative. It is a mistake to bewilder the minds of an audience, which rarely includes many special students, with problems in which no vital interest is taken, and for the consideration of which little or no previous training can be assumed. The preacher on the Old Testament, therefore, is occupied with spiritual, doctrinal, moral, and practical questions: not with the results of research. For him as a pastor and spiritual guide the Old Testament contains the Holy Scriptures as they were used for the same purpose by our Lord and His Apostles. The question for him to consider is not how they came into being, but what they are and what their Divine message is, and how best it can be transmitted to the hearts of men and women. In the words of my friend and teacher, Bishop Westcott, "The Old Testament substantially as we have it was the Bible of the Lord and the Apostles"; and now, as then, those Scriptures "are able to make men wise unto salvation"; now, as then, "are profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness."

Our Lord's own use of the Old Testament Scriptures should be our continual reminder and inspiration for our practical guidance. It reveals to us the slight and superficial character of our endeavours to employ the Old Testament for spiritual instruction and moral teaching. It rebukes us for

our scanty knowledge of its contents, our hasty despair to profit by them, our cowardly retreat into mere questions of antiquity or history and geography as an easy substitute for the deeper significance which is to be sought, and which the Lord always found, in the sacred writings.

Let us, therefore, rest assured of the wealth of material for the preacher's use, which remains unaffected by the results of recent researches into the Old Testament. Perhaps our very familiarity, or possibly our ignorance, prevents us from realising the depth and variety of the religious teaching contained in the Bible of the Jewish Church, and enforced in so many ways in prose and poetry, in narrative and exhortation, in proverb and parable. It infinitely transcended the best gifts of Greece and Rome in spiritual power and devotional purity. There stand out the great fundamental principles of religious thought and life; that there is a God, that He is One; that He is a spiritual Being; that He made the Universe; that He made man in His own image and likeness; that man can hear His word and hold communion with Him; that the world is governed by the law of God's righteousness and love; that man is made to love God and to love his neighbour.

But apart from these vast primary subjects of theology—which perhaps we too often wrongly assume no longer require enforcing from the pulpit

in terms appropriate to the thought of our own day—there are aspects of theological inquiry in Old Testament study which have been in a striking measure modified by modern research.

I. *The Theology of the Old Testament.*—We see now, much more clearly than we did a century ago, that the theology of the Old Testament must be handled in a strictly historical method. The Old Testament does not anticipate the New. The typology and allegorical interpretations in which the Fathers and schoolmen rejoiced, failed in accurate exegesis, because they lacked the means of historical access to the mind of the writers. The bud is not the full flower: the Old Testament may contain premonitions, and supply illustrations, of distinctive New Testament teaching. We must not look to the Old Testament for proofs, *e.g.*, of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity or of the Resurrection, which were only revealed to us in and through the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The theology of the Old Testament is historically progressive. It rests upon the experiences of Israel's national life; and the revelation of the Divine nature and will is continuously interpreted by the men moved by the Holy Spirit. It is a clearly recognised advance from knowledge to knowledge, from grace to grace. The conceptions of the nature of God, of sin, of holiness, of a life to come, grow in distinctness with the progress of the revelation.

And the progress of theological thought is being better understood in the light of the more assured results of research into the character and history of the books.

II. *The Morality of the Old Testament.*—The old stumbling-block caused by this subject has practically been removed. The morality of the Old Testament writers is recognised in the light of modern research, as presenting no final or perfect standard. If it is imperfect, it is progressive, it corresponds to the limitations of the time. This is understood in our day; it was not understood by our forefathers. The possession of slaves and the practice of slavery, the practice of polygamy, retaliatory murder, wars of extermination against the heathen, imprecatory denunciations, such things have been justified by appeals to the Old Testament. We have learned a better lesson from our studies; and we know it as an assured result, that these things faithfully reflect the imperfect, yet ever progressive, condition of Israelite morality, through which, or in spite of which, it pleased God that the advance should continually be made towards the higher revelation of God's wisdom and love for men. Moreover, a far wider field of moral teaching has been obtained by our better knowledge of the prophetical writings. The prophets live for us in a degree unknown to former generations. In an age when social problems press most urgently, the

preacher of Christ is drawing fresh inspiration from the prophets of Israel: and if, for purposes of edification, much of the Jewish law seems "nigh unto vanishing away," much in the writings of the prophets has by way of compensation revived with a new life.

III. *Messianic Teaching.*—Many passages that our forefathers could only interpret as predictions of the personal Messiah, are now seen to possess a primary reference to contemporary personages or events, and to admit only in a secondary sense of application to the expectation of the Messiah. But if less full of personal prediction, the prophets are found to testify more abundantly to the general Messianic idea. It embraced the whole nation. The hope of redemption and of the Kingdom of God filled the thoughts of the faithful. "The Spirit of Christ in the Old Testament," says my friend George Adam Smith, "is not confined to its human heroes and ideals. The length and the breadth, the height and the depth of it, belong to the Old Testament's revelation of God Himself."

IV. *The Divine Revelation.*—Lastly, the belief in a Divine Revelation through Israel is not shaken by modern research. Naturalistic explanations prove wholly inadequate to account for the phenomena. The history of Israel remains unique and unparalleled. To that history the Scriptures of the Old Testament correspond. The revelation of the

Divine nature and purpose comes to us through the medium of a unique record, in harmony with the actual experience of national life.

Turn we now to the results which more especially affect the teacher. They are literary and historical. An improved knowledge of the literature and history, if it has profoundly modified our previous views, has come to the relief of the teacher and the apologist. It has dissipated many doubts. It has caused the abandonment of many false and indefensible positions. I can here instance but one or two.

1. *Questions of Physical Science.* — The old difficulties arising from the futile attempts to reconcile the Genesis account of the Creation and the Flood with the rapid advances of modern scientific knowledge have been removed by modern research. We now know that there existed in the Semitic nations of Western Asia a primitive tradition concerning the beginnings of the Universe and concerning a great flood. The Genesis account gives the Hebrew version, with which there has been found in fairly close agreement an Assyrian version written in the cuneiform character. Long before Moses, and probably long before Abraham, this tradition of the Cosmogony was well known. The Genesis account tells the famous story in the terms—not of the polytheism or superstition which pervade the Babylonian version—but of the pure Israelite faith in Jehovah. The first pages of our Bibles teach

neither accurate science nor literal history. But in the simple outlines of the inimitable narrative which reproduces the popular tradition, it laid deep the foundations of the first principles of all religion—no primer of science, but the very Protevangelium of the Word of God.

2. *History.*—The historical questions raised by the narrative books of the Old Testament must be answered on their own merits. The early traditions of the nomadic state lead up to the more connected history of the monarchical period. Some points are confirmed, and others rendered doubtful, by Assyrian study. The Israelite writings are primarily religious in purpose. They furnish the historian with materials for history rather than with history itself. They reproduce a series of incidents selected, for the most part, for their significance, whether historical or symbolical, in the religious discipline of the people.

The character of the Divine revelation has not relieved us of any single task or duty in the work of intellectual research. These writings are for our learning in spiritual things. They are not to save us trouble in the human study of literature. And the determination of what is literal history, what allegorical, and the like, is not attained by any casual recognition of their inspired character. "The Biblical critic approaches the Scriptures from their literary side by the same methods as he would approach any other ancient writings, if with more

scrupulous care and a more present sense of his responsibility" (Westcott).

3. *Comparative Religion.*—This study has revealed to us the somewhat startling fact that the Israelite worship, its rites and institutions, its sacrificial system, its distinctions of clean and unclean, stood in close resemblance to the worship of other Semitic races. It can no longer be claimed that the externals of the Israelite religion present an absolutely unique feature in ancient religious life. "The aim of the Hebrew legislation was not so much to *create* a new system as to give a *new significance* to that which had already long existed among Semitic races, and to lay the foundation of a higher symbolism leading to a more spiritual worship."

4. *Literary Criticism.*—It is under this head that the greatest change of view—and probably the one of not the least significance—has taken place. The old view assumed that each book was written by one eminent author; until the series was complete and the whole collection was revised by Ezra. That view—so simple and yet so mechanical—was devoid of literary evidence. The books of the Pentateuch and the other narrative books are shown to possess writings of very different style; and to be composite in structure. Some, like Ecclesiastes, Esther, and Daniel, are shown by their language to belong to the latest stage of classical Hebrew.

The compilatory origin of many of the books explains the presence of many minor discrepancies, duplications, and contradictions, for which, previously, no satisfactory account had been obtained. The laws, which present three or four groupings derived from different periods, are referred back to the first great legislator, Moses, with whose name and work are bound up the foundations of Israelite constitution. The name of David, the sweet Psalmist, is employed in the same way to embrace many poetical writings of quite uncertain date; while the names of Solomon and of Isaiah were popularly attached to writings that were collected with the Proverbs of Solomon and the prophecies of Isaiah.

5. *The Jewish Canon of Scripture.*—The collection of the sacred books and their recognition as an authoritative canon was a gradual process, which offers points of comparison with the collection of the New Testament writings. This gradual process seems to have been based on popular religious usage. In the time of our Lord some books, like Esther and Ecclesiastes, were still viewed with suspicion by many Rabbinic teachers. The gradual historic process of the formation of the canon is not without its instructive features. Each book had its own significance and value; each bore its part in the training of the Jewish Church, and in the varied preparation for the coming of the Messiah. But the books are neither homogeneous nor equal in

value and power. The attempt to regard them as such breaks down. The results of historical inquiry confirm the verdict of common sense.

Enough has been said to illustrate the results of modern research on the literary and historical side.

The teacher has in his hands a nobler instrument of education. "It is," says Westcott, "when the books of the Bible are studied as other books that their unique character is proved beyond controversy." The teacher is called upon to exercise judgment, to study history, and to study more carefully the books themselves.

Modern commentaries — need I give names? — compared with those we used forty years ago are the best illustration of the effect of modern research in the truest interests of the teacher.

The books of the Old Testament have gained in vividness of interest as they have been shown to be more true to history. They may be thought less perfect in accuracy, less encyclopædic in value; but they are seen to correspond more faithfully to the life of Israel. Nor does the fact that they were not exempt from the ordinary processes of origin and composition impair the substantive value of their mission.

They remain the greatest religious literature of any people in the history of the world. Their light was not the true Light, but it heralded the coming of the true Light of the world. Closely as we

scrutinise its appearance, and minutely analyse its component parts, we shall not dim its brightness, nor diminish the wonder of its witness; nay, nor be losers by one ray of its joy and consolation, as alone in the dark firmament of the ancient world it hangs over the inn at Bethlehem.

V

PHYSICAL SCIENCE AND THE FIRST CHAPTER OF GENESIS[1]

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."—GENESIS i. 1.

IT is the first sentence of the Bible. They are the words we eagerly spelled out, when first we began to read. They contain no hard definition. No deep discussion stands at the threshold of Holy Scripture. The simple words that I have read assume our belief in God; they declare not His character, but His action.

Little, indeed, when first we read it, did we know of the wordy wars that had been fought over this first chapter in our Bibles. Little should we then have recked of the difficulties it had caused. The language was so translucently simple. The picture, in its main features, was so distinct and majestic.

[1] A Sermon preached at St. Luke's Church, Liverpool, on Sunday, September 20, 1896, on the occasion of the visit of the British Association to Liverpool.

The impression it produced on our minds then was indelible for all our lives. Hence I feel that I can venture to appeal to your familiarity with the contents of the chapter, while I speak for a few moments of certain mighty truths arising out of it, which, on an occasion like the present, may usefully be brought before our minds.

And in so doing I have no fear of being thought guilty of anything blameworthy or rash. A clergyman does not teach Physical Science from the pulpit; but a clergyman is expected to teach Holy Scripture. And I would fain believe, that in the present day the number of my brethren is increasing, who from this wonderful Preface to God's Word can take courage to speak to their people for their spiritual strengthening and comfort.

During the long and illustrious reign of our beloved and most gracious Queen[1] a change has passed over men's minds. The feeling of suspicion, with which the great progress of Physical Science was once regarded by Christian thinkers, has practically disappeared. It is no longer supposed that the geologist or astronomer, who announces some further discovery throwing light upon the vexed question of the antiquity of our globe, must have as his sinister ulterior motive that of discrediting the

[1] The Sermon was preached three days before the date on which Queen Victoria's reign was privileged to exceed in length as in prosperity all previous reigns in England.

authority of Holy Scripture. The opposition to the splendid theory with which the names of Darwin and Wallace are associated, has given way to an attitude of respectful and expectant admiration, if not absolutely of uniform assent.

In a word, it is no exaggeration to say that the voice of Christian Religion unfalteringly proclaims to the student-chiefs of Physical Science, "Go in and possess the goodly land that lies unoccupied before you; bring to us the fruits of your labour that we may offer them unto the Lord. For all that is won for truth is holy and acceptable in God's sight, and shall be so in the sight of His servants."

The Church no longer endeavours to dictate the terms upon which the progress of Physical Science may be acknowledged. The folly of calling upon Galileo to recant could not be repeated by a Church in our day. And yet, even that was a folly which, we need to be reminded, was not peculiar to any one age, nor to any one Church. It represented a mental temptation to which we are all alike exposed, when we prefer, very naturally, some cherished tradition to the knowledge obtained by more accurate methods of observation.

The intellectual ferment, which is represented in the modern ardent pursuit of the Physical Sciences in their ever widening circles, has no parallel in history, save in the vast revival of learning at the close of the fifteenth and at the beginning of the

sixteenth centuries. Its influence has been profoundly felt on all sides. It has widened the range of human interest. It has promoted accuracy of thought. It has insisted upon intrepid honesty in utterance. And I make no doubt that the change which contemporaneously has passed over Christian thought has largely been brought about by the new intellectual atmosphere which the study of the Physical Sciences has produced. For Theological Science moves. It too progresses. It too knows not standing still save in death. The theology of no generation exactly resembles that of its predecessor. It cannot idly repeat. It too sifts tradition; it too rearranges ideas, states old truths in new lights, casts aside crudities, and sooner or later drops superstitions.

But out of the very peace which now reigns between Religion and Physical Science there arises the peril of a most grave and fatal error. It is one that may attack us on this side or on the other, according as our interests are liable to be exclusively absorbed in religious or physical studies. It is the error that shows itself in the tendency to divide our universe, and our human nature, and our social life, into distinct and separate partitions. "Here is a hemisphere," we say in all innocence, "for the physical investigator; and here is another for the theologian; let them not trespass upon one another's domain." And as we say so, we give

colour to the subtle delusion that somehow or other there are two kinds of worlds, one for the student of Theology, another for the student of Physical Science; and two Holy Spirits, one that directs the reason of the scientist in his laboratory, the other that rules the devotion of the saint in his oratory; and so finally two classes of human life, one secular, and the other sacred.

My friends, if to some, fearful of collision, it should appear a matter of relief that our camps should be pitched far apart, I confess that to my mind it appears a policy of utter enfeeblement for the whole conduct of the warfare of life, if we be permitted to lose touch of one another, or in any degree to become estranged. To such dualism (for it is nothing else) Christian teaching, at its best, has in every age been vehemently opposed; and rightly so. For it is only cowardice or suspicion which prompts a Theologian to say to the man of science, "Thou hast no part with me." It is only prejudice or suspicion, which prompts the physical inquirer to say to the Theologian, "Thou hast no part with me." Our life is one, our work one. We may be far separated in the field of our labours, like Nehemiah's men upon the wall of Jerusalem. But our labours unite us. We may have different duties entrusted to our charge. The loss to the whole human race will be infinite, if we fail to work together; just as the gain will be infinite, if we are

brave enough and trustful enough to work together, aye, and to pray together, that so the whole life of mankind may move forward in healthy progress towards its goal.

Now, as I read it, teaching to this effect stands out clear from the great lessons which are to be drawn from the first page of Genesis. I do not go to that chapter as to a science primer. There are, I am well aware, many of my brethren who contend, with real learning and devout zeal, for its literal reconciliation with, nay, for its actual anticipation of, modern discoveries in Physical Science. But the Church to which we belong does not work in fetters. Long ago it won for itself liberty of Biblical Interpretation. And in the privilege of that liberty, in no spirit of controversy, I am glad to avow that I for one (and I know I speak for many others) cannot look for nineteenth-century learning in that early Hebrew narrative. Rather than put upon those majestic verses any forced interpretation or adaptation to modern science, I prefer to accept them in their literal sense. They are the simple outlines in which the poetry of the Hebrew mind attired the cosmogony of the Semitic folklore. It was the physical science of an old-world age and country. It contradicts, we are told, modern physical science. What then? I turn not for my instruction in astronomy, or geology, or physiology, to this first chapter of Genesis; I turn to that other

Bible written on the face of Nature, interpreted, translated, as it has been, for us, by the famous teachers of science in our own century, moved, as we believe, by the same Spirit of God that inspired the writers of Holy Writ.

And, so far from thus doing dishonour to these first pages of Scripture, or desiring to do so, I unhesitatingly declare that the three first chapters of Genesis contain for me a larger measure of spiritual instruction than whole books that come later on in my Bible. They contain, revealed under the forms of a symbolism for which a phase of rudimentary and erroneous science in Palestine was the chosen vehicle, spiritual truths which belong to the very foundation of our faith.[1]

1. It lies at the very root of all Christian religion that our Word of Revelation should open, not with the Call of Abraham, or the Covenant of Circumcision, or the Law of Sinai, but with the Creation of the Heaven and the Earth. There is One Lord for the physical world and for the spiritual. True; the salvation through Christ has come to us in history from the People of Israel. But the work of Redemption is not a Jewish event, but the continuance of the work of Creation, to be consummated in the days of "the Restoration of all things." The love that was manifested on the

[1] On the whole of this subject I venture to refer the reader to my book on *The Early Narratives of Genesis* (Macmillan and Co., price 3s.).

Cross is the love that was shown in the framing of the Universe. To us, with the Bible in our hands, the two epochs, if the phrase be permissible, are inseparable, that of Creation and that of Redemption. The whole teaching of Revelation springs, as it were, from this chapter of Genesis. The God who made the world did not send it "spinning down the grooves of change," and then gaze at a distance upon its course, unheeding of its destiny, regardless of its inhabitants. The same God that created has also redeemed, even now sanctifies, even now encompasses us with mercies, and will hereafter in a fashion and a manner yet to be revealed restore. The Gospel of Genesis is one of Hope.

2. It lies, moreover, at the root of our Christian faith that God's dealings with the Universe have ever followed the line of orderly growth and slow development. Whole libraries of controversy have been written concerning the Six Days of Creation, in which the Hebrew and, apparently, the Babylonian Cosmogonies grouped their descriptions of the formation of the heavens and the earth. Those days are an abiding picture, a perfect symbol, of that process, upon the laws of which, in its physical aspect, the inquiries of modern time have shed such abundant light.

We see in this chapter, though indeed it is from the old-world point of view according to which the earth was the centre of the whole system of the

universe—we see an ascending scale from nebulous chaos to solid earth and rolling ocean, from vegetable kingdom to animal, from the brute beast to spiritual man. The spirit life of man forms part of the same great design as the stars racing above our heads and the coral insect labouring beneath the waves. One plan, one purpose embraced all. And while the spirit-life of man is on earth the crowning feature of the creative design, who dare say it must be the final stage? The very presence of its failures points to a higher Unity towards which we travel.

Thus it is that once again we are led from the scene of Creation to the thought of the Incarnation. We are pointed away from the highest stage of creation reached on earth to Him, who, as Scripture teaches, not only made the worlds, but gave Himself that He might proclaim, as Man to man, the Divine purpose of his nature and that highest spiritual type for which man is fitted, and towards which he is created to aspire.

In that larger conception of the world, we no longer see in the coming of the Son of Man a happy result of man's corruption, by which, as it has been grimly said, "sin was a blessing in disguise." We see in His coming upon earth a part of the one great design; and though, as a consequence of sin, that coming was necessarily vouchsafed under conditions of humiliation and suffering, still it was, we may believe, from the very

foundation of the world part of the harmonious development, of which the first stages are traced in this chapter of Genesis.

Aye, and terrible though it be that the generations of ignorance and darkness should so far outnumber those of privilege and light; terrible though it be that the seeds of life that die and rot should so infinitely exceed in number those that are fertilised and live, still we may have faith in this, that there is no incident in the Universe nor in human history, no concourse of atoms, no warring of nations, that is fortuitous or vain, that has not sprung from some well-founded cause, and does not lead to some well-ordered result. Our impatience longs to see causes at once, and to view results at once. We dread the seeming waste of life. And yet those Six Great Days of our chapter were evening as well as morning, darkness as well as light. Blackness of despair, night of neglect, may seem to envelop whole ages, whole continents! Even so; for so it has seemed good to the wisdom of Him who has shown us, that in the lower world of nature whole ages minister to the perfecting of a single type. In good time we may believe light shall shine out of the gloom, and reveal to us the Divinely appointed path. The Gospel of Genesis is a Gospel of Faith.

3. It goes to the very root of our religion that man has been made "in the image of God." Man's nature differs essentially from that of the animals.

He may receive knowledge of God. He can, as it were, hear God's voice speaking to him, it may be in the utterance of reason, it may be in the utterance of conscience, it may be in the thoughts of the imagination, it may be in the written Word of Revelation.

We have here the fundamental teaching of Scripture concerning our manhood. Man is God's offspring. How his bodily structure was framed, that, by comparison, is a matter of slight moment, and contains no spiritual message. It might have been, as was the tradition of centuries, by the fiat of an instantaneous decree; or it might have been, as we are rather led to believe by modern teachers, by virtue of some age-long process of slow evolution. Scripture, as the Word of Revelation, deals only with man as he emerged from the process, sudden or slow, of formation; as he stood first equipped with the full properties of manhood, potentially complete for the duties and experiences, in body, mind, and soul, of human life—the one spiritual Being, the one son of God among the creatures of earth.

Made "in the image of God": we do but limit the scope of this thought, if we seek to identify that "image" with the conscience, or the free-will, or the reason. The whole of our being—bodily, mental, and spiritual—was made to bear the "image" of the Divine Nature. It is this that Christ proclaimed when He said, "The kingdom of God is

within you." Christ taught not a Gospel of formulæ, nor a law of ceremonies, nor a system of philosophy; He taught men the Fatherhood of God, and by His Cross He manifested forth the eternal love that embraced the whole family of the human race. It was this that needed to be revealed. For who could guess it? or who, if supremely guessing it, could have persuaded men?

The fact, then, that was written on the first page of Genesis was endorsed by the testimony of Christ. It was sealed in His blood, poured out for our sins upon the Cross. He that was "the very image of the Divine substance," called us back to the home of the Father's love, assured us that we were not children of blind chance, or cruel fate, or wayward deities, but of Him who was the First Cause of all, Love and Holiness and Purity, as well as Wisdom and Power.

On a day like the present, let us also recall the fact, and appreciate its significance, that dominion over the world is one of the high prerogatives that, according to Holy Scripture, have been granted to our race. We are not, that is, placed in the world to separate ourselves from it, but to reign over it. And who, if he reflects upon this, can fail to perceive that, in our own generation, mankind has made greater progress than at any other epoch in the world's history towards the assertion of this sovereignty? "As his powers expand, his control

over the physical resources of the world grows more complete; and in the same proportion his own nature is developed to a fuller enjoyment of the capacities with which he is endowed" (Westcott).

This dominion of man is asserted in the passion not only to subjugate and control, but also to search into and understand the mysteries of the Universe of which he is a part. This craving which has so conspicuously taken possession of our own time, confronts us with the deep things, the riddles of life, terrestrial and celestial, physical and spiritual. For let us not forget that there is a craving to reach after the things of God, as well as after the things in the earth and sea and sky. But there is no sort of proportion between the finite things of Nature and the infinite things of God. We can only know of God, as God wills and permits that He should be known. In a word, our knowledge of God bears no proportion, like our knowledge of physical things, to the exercise and capacity of human faculties. It depends solely upon the measure and manner in which it is God's loving pleasure to reveal Himself. The Gospel of Genesis is a Gospel of Humility.

(4) Lastly, it is important for us to notice the great truth expressed in the Genesis narrative by the statement that "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." The teaching of Holy Scripture has no sympathy with the morbid attitude of thought—borrowed from old

superstition—which regarded the body as a prison-house, and the earth as something of a bubble and much of a blunder. To Christian thought, God "hath done all things well." The splendour and the glory of Creation, the immeasurable vastness and the unspeakable delicacy of created things, are the signs of His handiwork. Though death reigned for "aeons" before the appearance of man upon earth, though the splendours of one age are reared on the ruins of another, God saw that what He had made was "good." He did not say suffering and violence and wild fear and agony were good; but He saw the conditions under which the ideas of "good" and "evil" arose, and He saw that they were good. So terrific, so inexplicable is the mystery of suffering on earth, that God in the flesh shared it with us and consecrated even the path of death. The signs of His presence on earth were mostly acts of healing and restoration. He proclaimed that there can be no acquiescence in our nature with the imperfections or with the woes of life. He who "forgiveth all thy sins" is He who "healeth all thine infirmities." His ministry was a benediction upon the noble profession that draws so closely to the earthly side of His work, that is everywhere in our land going about "doing good."

He who has written the word "good" over the relentless forces of nature, could not leave us unpitied, unredeemed, given over as a prey to the

moral disorders of life. His pity and love far exceeded that of individual man; He impersonated the passion of love and tenderness for the whole race. He "took away the sin of the world"; and, so far as it was possible, He took the world's sin to Himself. He made Himself one with us; He triumphed over the powers of evil on behalf of the whole race. The process of the Spiritual restoration may be slow. It may go from stage to stage. But the Divine Purpose is not thwarted. The work of God, in the domain where sin has entered, no less than in the domain where death and suffering prevail, shall have its perfect fulfilment—"God," as St. Paul says, "will sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth." The Gospel of Genesis is a Gospel of Love.

I have thus spoken to you of three or four points in which the old Creation story of Genesis has set forth the intimate relation of the outer and the inner life, and in which also the teaching and the Cross of Christ have confirmed the truths derived from a page that no generation of Christian men can afford to ignore.

Our work and duties in life, I repeat, may be very different; our interests, our studies, very varied. But it is the spirit in which our work is done that determines its character.

> Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws
> Makes that and the action fine.

All are summoned to give their best as an offering, not to themselves and their own fame, but to the God who hath made the heavens and the earth.

Many an unlikely spot has been hallowed by the unselfish lives of those who are said by the world to have "buried" themselves in the pursuit of science. Physical Science has her martyrs and her magnificent heroes—men who have laid down their lives for truth. She has her tragedies of faith; she counts upon her roll many devout saints of God. Her servants proclaim at once the unity and the variety of the created life, upon which the seal of blessing has been stamped by the Humanity of Christ.

His Kingdom ruleth over all. His redemption is potential to embrace all. The Spirit of Knowledge is one with the Spirit of Holiness. Difficulties and limitations beset us in our researches into the physical and the spiritual alike. It is the Christian's joy and comfort, amid all the bewilderment and distresses of practical life, to know that He who has given us a hope beyond the grave, He who has pardoned sin and declared to us the Father's love, is also He who *In the beginning created the heaven and the earth.*

VI

THE STUDY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE ELEMENT OF COMPILATION IN THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOKS[1]

UNDER this somewhat ponderous title I venture to introduce a subject which cannot fail to have some interest for those whose tastes or studies have led them into the wide fields of Old Testament inquiry. It does not fall within my present purpose, even if it were within my power, to discuss any of the recent results or speculations of criticism. Summaries of these, which appear from time to time in our magazines and reviews, render such a task almost unnecessary.

My object in the present paper is rather to consider the spirit in which the results of modern criticism should be accepted, taking as a conspicuous example the ascertained compilatory structure of

[1] A paper read before the London Junior Clerical Society, at Sion College, October 8, 1889, and again, by request, before the clergy of the Rural Deanery of Chelsea, December 12, 1889.

certain books. The invitation to read a paper upon Old Testament criticism presented an opportunity for a treatment of the subject as far removed as possible from the line either of apology or of attack. It is a line of inquiry beset with peculiar difficulties in our present state of knowledge. But it offers also special compensation. For the boon of liberated religious thought, when its true character is realised, far outweighs in value the inevitable apparent loss, incidental to the adoption of views less compact, less definite, perhaps less intelligible, than those which have traditionally been accepted in the Church.

All will admit that patient and skilful criticism has in recent years made substantial progress in our knowledge of the structure of the Old Testament. Criticism has, with obvious advantage on both sides, been met with counter-criticism. The battle of controversy is still raging round the most disputable details. Amid the smoke and din of exchanging volleys, we hardly notice that the field of combat is being changed. While we concentrate our attention upon this point or that, we are in danger of ignoring the significance which the assured progress in our knowledge has, or is likely to have, for our study of the Old Testament. It is surely a matter of grave importance, that we should endeavour to realise the character of the new ground, on which in all probability, to say the least, we shall eventually have to take our stand. It is surely prudent to pause awhile

and estimate the gain, which the progress of our study is likely to bring with it in the near future. For gain it must be, however costly the apparent loss of an untenable position. Gain it must be to us and to all, if we are enabled to see things more truly and to teach men so. The goal can only be seen (I will not say reached) by a generation that is prepared to make its sacrifice at each halting-place in the onward journey of religious thought.

The assured progress, to which I have alluded, forms the assumption upon which the present paper is based. It is an assumption, which even the more conservative students in our own country are prepared to admit in a modified degree, that recent investigation into structure, composition, and style has revealed the compilatory character of a large proportion of the books of the Old Testament. Few scholars would be found to dispute so elementary a statement. But few probably—and certainly very few of the clergy—have realised its significance. And it is because each year of Old Testament study confirms this elementary principle, and tends to widen its application, that I wish to call attention to it. Familiar as certain literary details of this subject may have become to many students, no apology is needed for reminding them of its relation to Christian thought. The just appreciation of the composite structure of the books of the Old Testament Canon must ultimately influence the attitude of modern

Christian teaching towards many problems that centre around Holy Scripture.

It is perhaps desirable at this point to guard against misconception, and to define carefully the position which we intend to take up in dealing with the burning questions of Old Testament criticism. Let us admit at once that it would be little short of disastrous if criticism impaired the value and use of the reading of the Old Testament for practical and devotional religious life. But criticism is powerless to touch this one method of study, which both experience and precept unite in pronouncing to be incumbent upon all members of the Christian Church alike. It is powerless to lessen the virtue of the only method in which all can participate equally. The mass of readers are precluded from attempting anything further, by lack of leisure, of training, of books, of interest or inclination. But the spiritual and educational value of the simply practical and devotional study of the books of the Old Testament is universal and never diminishes. It was never more essential than it is now. In days of extended individual freedom and unparalleled facility of communication between the nations of the world, the Christian reader of the latter part of this century will with profit look yet more closely than hitherto to the lessons of the Divine revelation vouchsafed in the history and literature of the chosen people and through the instrumentality of its chosen men.

Lessons of moral and spiritual life, for individual, family, and nation, start up out of the pages of law and prophecy, of psalm and history, and are of eternal import. Now as much as in the apostolic era they can make men "wise unto salvation."

But the Christian student cannot afford to rest there. The experimental aspect of the study of Jewish Scripture does not exhaust the possibilities of fruitful religious inquiry. His range of investigation cannot be thus limited. A fresh field of labour opens out before him when he understands that, although the Spirit of revelation is conveyed through the letter, the letter is not the revelation itself, but its record, a human literature by which the Divine message is transmitted from age to age and race to race.

No plea of reverence can be justified, or even tolerated, which would prohibit the student from investigating as narrowly as possible the human conditions under which the word of revelation has been communicated. The Church cannot afford to leave such inquiries in the hands of hostile or prejudiced critics. Her wisdom will require her sons to submit the literature of the Bible to the same searching criticism as other ancient literature—to a criticism more rigorous and unsparing in proportion as its hold over men's beliefs is more universal. Her call to us is imperative: and our duty is clear. We must not shrink from it on account of the almost

proverbial unpopularity of such studies in the Church. Their unpopularity is not a matter which should surprise us, however disappointing it may be to find Christian scholarship mistaken for the veiled ingenuity of foes. In spite of the unreasonable character of much of the outcry against modern Biblical criticism, students should be prepared to display the most patient sympathy towards those whose susceptibilities they have disturbed and too often thoughtlessly provoked. After all, it is only natural that the requirement to treat the books of Scripture like any other books should provoke antipathy. The task, it must be admitted, is in practice well-nigh impossible. The coolest and most judicial sagacity is almost inevitably biassed, in the consideration of Biblical questions, by the influence of a long and sacred association, which seems to demand from the Christian the partiality of peculiar veneration and to excite a corresponding amount of prejudice and suspicion in the minds of avowed adversaries of our creed. Let us remember, too, that some are jealous of the effect, which the critical analysis of the books is likely to have upon their influence as devotional literature. There is a widespread fear lest the less strictly religious methods of study, conducted by the more learned few, in whom they have little confidence with respect to matters spiritual, should have the effect of undermining the simple faith which has been erected upon teaching drawn from Scripture as the

people's book. Again, there are undoubtedly many minds, which have been repelled from the critical study of Scripture by the extravagance of extremist theories and by the reckless language of ignorant people, who distort while they seek to reproduce what they have failed to understand.

We should bear in mind the common want of acquaintance with the Hebrew language, the prevalent ignorance as to the formation of the Old Testament Canon, and the lack of imaginative sympathy on the part of modern Christian thought towards the ancient literature of a Semitic race. These are obstacles which affect us all more or less; and while they envelop Old Testament inquiry in darkness, they are apt to encourage the impression that all movement in this region is insecure, and that it will be best and safest to remain content with our present position. In conclusion, let us sum up whatever other reasons exist for the opposition to critical study under these two heads: (1) That even the youngest among us do not like to confess that our views may yet have to undergo the same process of modification and reconstruction which has mellowed the wisdom of previous generations; (2) that Biblical criticism will never escape misunderstanding on the part of those who do not wish to welcome it.

We turn then to the principal subject of this paper, the literary, as distinct from the devotional,

study of the Old Testament. It can be pursued on two very different lines. Each of them is essential to the full comprehension of the sacred writings. *Firstly*, they may be treated as a literary whole. As such, they give their witness to the life and growth of the Israelite people; they explain the final development of the Jewish religion; they reveal the formation of Jewish thought and character and society; they are chief among the historic influences which prepared the way for the coming of Christ. *Secondly*, the books may be subjected in detail to critical analysis. The history, style, structure, date of each writing will then receive close scrutiny. Results will be tabulated and systematised. Upon the basis of a comparison of internal evidence, the relationship of the various documents will be determined.

A few words are needed upon this second method of study. It is the genuine product of modern scholarship. It is possible indeed that its spirit may often carry us too far afield, and that it may tempt us now and again to pay excessive attention to the *minutiæ* of linguistic and grammatical analysis. If such is the case, we must look for an explanation in the rebound of Biblical interpretation from habits of hasty generalisation. The equilibrium of a free and devotional exegesis has not yet been perfectly adjusted. We are still held in some degree by the reaction from methods which applied to matters of

literary and historic interest the test of strictly religious assumptions. If its tendency is to be narrow, literal, and unenthusiastic, the modern method is not without its recompense. Closer analysis may indeed upset preconceived notions of date and authorship; but it gives a new power of correlating what has hitherto been regarded as separate and distinct; it substitutes for blind guess-work the scientific interest in a complex organism; it holds out the prospect that the varied elements in the written Word may contain an unsuspected sequence corresponding to creative epochs in the religious history of the people of Israel.

Very different from this is the other line of study that I mentioned first, which regards the Old Testament Scriptures as a whole, in their work of educating the Jewish race and of preparing for the final revelation in Christ. Regarded under this aspect, the writings of the Old Testament lie before us as they lay before our Lord and His apostles. They are the Canon of Scripture of the Jewish Church; they are the Bible of the synagogue, which moulded the thought and shaped the religious life of the Jews from whom the Church of Christ arose. To all intents and purposes the contents of the Scriptures, to which our Lord appealed, are identical with our Old Testament. Their vital significance to the Church of Christ and the secret of their influence have not changed since the first days of the apostolic

era. The significance of their teaching now, as then, is moral and religious; the secret of their influence now, as then, is spiritual. Literary criticism and historical analysis were foreign to the age at which Christ came upon earth. The Scriptures of the synagogues of Jerusalem derived their position from no approving board of critics, from no censorship of historians. They owed their unique ascendency to the popular conviction, that the Spirit of God had spoken eternal truth through the written Word. It was not any theory of peculiar structure or succession of authorship, but just this conviction of its spiritual truth and power, which, having received the reiterated sanction of our Lord and the apostles, occasioned the complete acceptance by the Christian Church of the whole Jewish Canon, as the literature of the partial revelation leading up, in the history of the chosen race, to that which was Final and Perfect. A moment's reflection is enough to show that this attitude, characteristic (in all reverence be it spoken) of our Lord and the apostles in their study and use of the Jewish Scriptures, is totally distinct from the investigation into letter and form, style and structure, which modern scholarship rightly claims to apply to the remains of an ancient religious literature. Wholly independent of vital religious issues, the determination of these literary problems fails to affect the fundamental relation of the Christian believer to the written Word. These problems

concern the literary phenomena, which have been the means of transmitting and are the means of teaching eternal truth. It falls to the responsibilities and the duties of our age to investigate phenomena with microscopic accuracy, and, having chronicled results, to draw such inferences as will most reasonably explain the mutual relation of documents, the signs of development in thought and expression, and the growth of religious ideas. Still, after all, the research into the literary phenomena of the books stands outside, it certainly never comes into conflict with, the vital religion, whose message Law, Prophets, and Hagiographa can convey to the boldest critic of our own day, no less than to the humblest proselyte who looked for the redemption of Israel in the lifetime of our Lord.

If such be our position, we may approach the critical and analytical study of the books of the Old Testament "in full assurance of faith." We shall not be surprised, if the results of modern investigation applied to a literature, which for centuries seemed to the reverent spirit of Christendom to be shut off from the free operation of human criticism, should prove strange and startling. We shall await with the composure of an undisturbed trust the solution of momentous literary questions. We shall at least endeavour to check the sense of wrong, with which we are prone to greet each result of criticism that conflicts with our own tradition. Lastly, we shall

be in no hurry to draw the conclusion, that belief in inspiration is being violated, because the veil of centuries is being slowly removed from the human frame which has embodied the sacred message of the Spirit. More than this need scarcely be said here. For no theory as to the *modus* of inspiration—a matter concerning which we have no evidence—can help to determine questions of purely literary interest, questions that can only legitimately be determined by the recognised rules of human evidence.

It is no caricature of popular opinion, as prevalent not so very long ago, to say that the fact of a book being included in the Canon of the Old Testament was a sufficient reason with the mass of readers to assign its authorship, in its present literary form, to the most holy and influential Israelite of the period with which it dealt. The criticism of modern time puts such hasty assumptions to a severe test. The structure and composition of the book must be examined; the book must so far as possible first tell its own tale; in the absence of good external testimony, internal evidence must practically alone decide its place and period in the history of literature. The late tradition preserved among the Jews or in the Christian Church will of course be taken into account, but at the best such evidence will only be of a subsidiary nature. In the case of a book of great antiquity, convincing evidence of authorship,

unless stamped upon the writing itself, or corroborated by testimony from some source sufficiently near in point of time, is not probably to be expected. When this is first realised, we understand, perhaps for the first time, that the value of a sacred writing does not depend upon the identification of its author, nor even upon the unity of its authorship, any more than that its spiritual force is dependent upon the ascertained unique personality of the writer. Perplexity begins to vanish, and new light to flood our mind, when we first grasp the thought of the law of gradual growth dominating the field of the records of revealed religion. We learn with sensations akin to delight and wonder, that the complex literature of the Old Testament is more bound up with the ordinary life of the Israelite people, and the slowly succeeding stages of religious growth, than with the isolated masterpieces of a few giant minds.

It is at this point that the realisation of the large element of compilation in the structure of the Old Testament books becomes a matter of such great and suggestive importance. Many of us can recall statements from the limited experience of our own range of reading, according to which the structure of the books of the Old Testament was of the simplest possible character. The history of the patriarchs by Moses, followed by the journals of the lawgiver himself and his successor Joshua, accounted for the first six books. Judges, Ruth, and the first

part of Samuel were assigned to the prophet Samuel, while the remainder of the books of Samuel fell to Nathan and Gad. The books of Kings were very naturally treated as the writing of Jeremiah; Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther were ascribed to Ezra. Job was written by the patriarch himself, or by his presumed contemporary, Moses. The Psalms were the work of David. Solomon bequeathed to us Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Canticles. The books of the prophets came, as we have them, from the pens of those whose names they bear. To summarise this view in a general statement, each book was treated as a separate literary whole; each was assigned, like any modern work, to the composition of some well-known man, whose time of influence coincided with the date to which the book was traditionally ascribed; the thought, that the special gift of inspiration was thus to be accredited to an individual writer, naturally led to the popular identification of the most holy men, who were to be accounted the channels of the revelation and the writers of the sacred books.

The criticism of recent years has put a very different complexion upon the opinion of students with respect to these topics of Biblical *prolegomena*. Men are now accepting without hesitation views strangely at variance with the old tradition. Thus, to take the most obvious instances, no difficulty is now found in accepting the statement, that the

Psalter contains the poetry of many different centuries, and that not only reigns of kings like Asa, Jehoshaphat, and Hezekiah, but the periods of the Captivity and the Return, and even of the Maccabean revolt, have largely contributed to the formation of a book once popularly thought to be almost limited to the writings of Davidic authorship. It has been an agreeable surprise to many to notice, with what general assent, if not open approbation, the statement (based on the internal evidence of the book) has been received that Ecclesiastes is the work of an unknown Jew, perhaps of Alexandria, living in the third century B.C., insomuch that the old tradition of Solomonic authorship is fast becoming obsolete. The probability, again, that the book of Job is to be included among the literary products of the exiles of the southern kingdom is being accepted, so far as can be judged at present, with every appearance of surprised satisfaction. Many an English reader has had pleasure in distinguishing for his own use the different groups of proverbial sayings, which, having been preserved in separate collections, were welded together in our book of Proverbs. In the case of the prophet Isaiah, scholars of all schools of thought are now attributing the latter portion of the book (xl.-lxvi.) to the period during or after the Babylonian captivity; and even in the earlier portion, the varieties in style and the peculiarities noticeable in the grouping of the

subject-matter have justified the explanation, that we have to deal here with *fasciculi* of Isaianic prophecies, combined with utterances of a later period, and arranged at a date long subsequent to the days of Hezekiah. The books of Jeremiah, Zechariah, and Daniel are also found to illustrate in different ways characteristic phases in the compilatory process.

Turning to the historical books, it is recognised that the books of Kings are the work of a compiler, who (whether or no he was Jeremiah), at least in recording the description of the temple, and in extracting the whole section relating to Elijah and Elisha, as well as the passages which are repeated almost *verbatim* in Isaiah and Jeremiah, made no effort to conceal the process which he put in practice. In the books of Samuel, the evidence of similar compilatory work, though less exposed to view, has been made abundantly clear. And in the three main divisions into which the book of Judges falls, it is not difficult to distinguish three originally different groups of writing, of which the central portion appears itself to be a compilation derived from different sources.

I would close this hasty notice of a few instances of compilation with a brief reference to the Pentateuch, upon which the closest attention of critics has been concentrated. The conclusion seems now to be very generally accepted, on good grounds, that it is

in the main a compilation of four documentary sources, which critics call the Elohist, the Jehovist, the Deuteronomist, and the Priestly Code, and that these four distinct strands of narrative can be distinguished not only in the Pentateuch, but also throughout at least the book of Joshua. Scholars, it is well known, long differed as to the relative proportions of these four elements of compilation. But on the main point agreement has been reached. The battle of controversy is no longer being fought over the question, whether the separate existence of these documents can be identified, but over a different question, which relates to the priority in date of the composition of these documents, and more particularly to the age in which the Priestly Code was written. Into the region of that thorny and technical question this is happily not the place to enter.

The foregoing sentences have very roughly summarised what is far from being an extremist statement of the degree in which compilation may be recognised in some of the books of the Old Testament. As scholars detach themselves from the Pentateuchal controversy, it is probable that other indications of compilation among the historical and prophetical writings will become more widely recognised. There is no doubt that in England many of us shrink from an idea which is at first sight startling and novel, partly because it seems to upset the opinion which has rested upon ecclesiastical tradition, partly too

because the very conception of the composite origin of a book is so different from our modern experience. Nevertheless, it is essential, I believe, that we should attempt to realise the possible necessity of altering preconceived ideas, and that we should prepare ourselves to appreciate results of criticism, the application of which will very likely be found to prevail more extensively than has generally been supposed probable. It was for this purpose that at the outset I endeavoured to point out, that these steps of advance in critical knowledge are no hindrance to the Christian student of Divine revelation. We need, however, to go a step further. It is not enough to tolerate change. We must learn to recognise, to appropriate, and to welcome its help. We must use it as God's gift to us; and I venture to think, that the frank recognition of the element of compilation may unexpectedly aid us in our understanding and enjoyment of the books of Scripture.

Let us pass in review a few points, which tend to show that this may prove to be the case.

1. In the first place, the recognition of the element of compilation in the structure of the books enables us to reconcile the presence of apparently late forms of language and allusions to late historical events side by side with evident tokens of great antiquity. The work of compilation has left the mark of the compiler's or the redactor's age upon

the writings of earlier time. They are no mere sporadic glosses and marginal interpolations. They represent the more recent deposits in the literary stratum, sections of which have been laid bare by the excavations of the critic. For the work of the compiler was often simple and even inartistic. The recognition of it will account for the existence of many a peculiarity, which English readers are apt, in all reverence, to put to the credit of the Hebrew style of writing. The apparent want of arrangement in some narratives, the rapid transition from one subject to another, the strange repetition in a slightly altered form of the same incident, the abrupt parenthetical introduction of apparently uncalled-for details and events, the insertion of lists of names, etc.—many of these strange features in the structure of the simplest books receive from the principle of compilation a satisfactory explanation. The compiler had nothing to conceal. His purpose was to transmit the best account of past events or the most complete *résumé* of some important utterance. What better way had the chronicler or compiler or scribe than to make the records from which he drew tell so far as possible their own tale in their own language?

2. In the second place, although many of the reputedly earliest writings show unmistakable signs of revision at different ages and of compilation at a comparatively late period, the separate existence

of their component documents carries us far back into remote antiquity. Thus, if we take the Pentateuch to illustrate my meaning, even supposing that the view is correct which assigns the Elohist and Jehovist documents to the literary activity of the Israelites in the ninth century B.C., it is to be remembered that each of these great written channels of tradition may be held to have had (in the same way as our own completed Pentateuch) a complex history of its own in the past. Both would have compiled from various sources the records and traditions which they now united and incorporated in their single channels. The further we recede into primitive time, the less likely are we no doubt to find traces of a continuous and orderly *written* history. But there is no reason to question, that from the earliest known ages numerous streams of oral and even of written tradition originated from and were propagated by the conditions of tribal life in Syria and of national life in Assyria and Egypt. As time passed on, the various confluents of narrative would become merged in a few main channels, which for vividness, force, simplicity, and completeness commended themselves most to the affections of the people. These oral and written traditions, preserved, as seems most probable, in the keeping and by the industry of the priestly families and the prophetical schools, and doubtless augmented from time to time from other sources, awaited their destiny of becoming

tributaries to the great stream of narrative and law which carried Judaism forth upon its mission to the world.

I venture to think, that many modern scholars who have skilfully and successfully subdivided the Pentateuch into its component parts have left themselves open to the misunderstanding, that they denied to these component parts any previous history. They have used language which was capable of being understood to mean that Elohist and Jehovist were the figments of one century, and the Priestly Code the figment of another. It appears to me that the analogy of the completed whole is applicable to the several parts; and although I am constrained to admit that the further subdivision of the parts may exceed the ingenuity, or at any rate the legitimate capacity, of literary analysis, I should strongly contend that a theory of the gradual growth of the component parts, as opposed to that of their sudden formation, will alone satisfactorily account for their origin and character. And I would suggest, that the fair acceptance of such a theory enables us to connect by no impossible links, but by the steady growth of literary power and the agglutination of different elements of tradition, the earliest memorials of Israel with their final embodiment in the books that have come down to us.

The thought of compilation will here remind us

that in the books of Scripture we are not dependent upon a single consecutive line of literature, but upon successive and even divergent threads of tradition. Their very variety emphasises the general unity of thought and accuracy of tradition, written and oral, which, when combined, has given so clear and continuous a narrative. These component documents comprise the substance of national tradition and literature, that was varied (*a*) as to the *manner* of its transmission—by writing, memory, song, genealogies; (*b*) as to its *agents* of communication —by priestly families, by schools of prophets, by royal scribes, by heads of tribes and families; (*c*) as to its *local origin*—by peculiarities of Northern and Southern Palestine, by special connection with the temple, with places of peculiar sanctity and scenes of eventful deeds.

3. Thirdly, it only remains to say, that the general phenomena of compilation indicate the presence of the same characteristics of Hebrew literature in its earlier as in its later stage. Its characteristics are, on the one hand, to preserve tenaciously, to abstain from removing, the landmarks of the ages; on the other hand, to accept accretions of spiritual force from every creative period and to assimilate the new life with the old. This will account, in the historical narrative, for the preservation of passages derogatory to Israelite heroes side by side with eulogistic memoirs. This

will account, in the records of legislation, for the insertion of later laws and customs in connection with, or embedded in, those of great antiquity. This will account for pages of Babylonian prophecy attached to the writings of Isaiah, for post-exilic and Maccabean Psalms, for an Alexandrian Ecclesiastes, and even for the expansion of the story of Daniel in the apocalyptic treatment of the second (?) century B.C.

As we look at the collection of the Old Testament books, we are reminded of one of our own English cathedrals, in which the strangely composite structure reveals the varying taste and sympathies of successive centuries. There is an interest and a meaning in each portion, mingled with much that is quaint and fantastic. And while the whole vast compacted building summons the spirits of worshippers into the presence of their God, each separate gable, tower, and arch not only speaks of the common faith, but also testifies to the individual force or frailty of some different generation, which contributed its best to the glory of God and for the use of those that should come after it.

It is at this point that I must bid farewell to a subject with which I have already too long occupied your attention and taxed your patience. It would take me too far afield to do more than hint at the extension of interest in the history of Israelite

religion, which arises from the recognition of this principle. The object of this paper will have been fully attained, if I have at all succeeded in calling attention to lines of thought, upon which modern criticism may be disarmed of some of its terrors for Christian readers of the Old Testament.

Before concluding, however, I would venture to express the conviction, that the true appreciation of the element of compilation should lead us a long way in the direction of understanding the process by which the sacred books acquired the recognition of what is called canonicity. The History of the Old Testament Canon forms the natural continuance of the present subject. All evidence tends to show that the idea of a canon of Scripture did not take its rise until towards the close of the monarchy, until the dispersion had begun, until the germ of the Jewish Church was seen and its possibilities understood. Not until then was the need recognised of collecting the various records of tradition, of history and law, of prophecy and poetry and wisdom, and of combining them for the purpose of knitting in closer spiritual union the members of the chosen race, the Israel of God dispersed throughout the world, whom no far-off temple-worship at Jerusalem could bind together in religious discipline.

Yet another and more profound subject cannot but be ultimately affected by the appreciation of the subject of this paper. The place and character

of Inspiration, in relation to writings of such strangely complex structure, is a matter upon which, with our limited material for forming a judgment, no hasty opinion should be hazarded. Attempts to classify Inspiration, and to distribute its operation between original authorship, successive stages of revision and transmission, and ultimate compilation, repel us by an assumption of familiarity with things of the Spirit, which transcend all human understanding.

Let us be content to stop humbly at the gates of such mysteries, confessing that, at this early stage of our partial knowledge, we have here no key. None the less let us hail the presence and acknowledge the power of that eternal Spirit, as we search with patience and hope the pages of the records of the Old Covenant. Those records—completed after centuries of slow development—had not long been recognised as the finished Canon of the Jewish race, when the Son of Man came, not to destroy, but to fulfil the covenant. Christ set His seal upon that Jewish Canon: "these" Scriptures, said He, "are they which bear witness of Me." And what more do we need? Not, surely, more definitions of Inspiration; but only this, a better discerning of the Spirit.

τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστι τὸ ζωοποιοῦν.

NOTE ON PAGES 80-81

"The mystery with which we are face to face in Scripture is that of a message or word from God, a divine book, which, as a matter of age-long experience, has actually produced in every period which has followed its completion results of infinite magnitude and importance. It is the total product, the complete work, which fulfils such vast and varied functions in the spiritual history of mankind. Questions in regard to the mode of its formation are secondary."—Ottley's *Aspects of the O.T.*, p. 16.

NOTE ON PAGE 91

"All the evidence is in favour of supposing that . . . the date when the traditions were finally committed to writing must not be confounded with the date when the oral tradition became fixed."—Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. v. Art. "Religion of Israel," p. 635*a*.

VII

THE VALUE OF THE APOCRYPHA[1]

IN the present day it can no longer be taken for granted that the books of the "Apocrypha" are familiar to English Churchmen. Probably it is correct to assume that no very large proportion of the present generation has ever attempted to read them.

It is no longer the case that any schoolboy could see the particular point of Shylock's cry (*Merch. of Ven.*, Act iv. Sc. 1), "A Daniel come to judgment! Yea, a Daniel! O wise young judge, how do I honour thee!" or the particular reference in the lines of Milton:

> Asmodeus with the fishy fume
> That drove him, though enamour'd, from the spouse
> Of Tobit's son (*Paradise Lost*, iv. 168).

The attitude of men towards the Apocrypha has doubtless greatly altered since the time when

[1] A paper read before the Exeter Church Congress, Tuesday, October 9, 1894.

the VIth Article was composed, which speaks of these books as those which "the Church doth read for example of life and instruction of manners." This assertion could most truly be made of the leading divines in England during the sixteenth century. Witness the homilies with their frequent quotations from the Aprocrypha; or old Hugh Latimer, as he appeals to the examples of life presented by the "Lady Judith" and the "Lady Susanna." The classical defence of the Church's use of the Apocrypha in her Lectionary, in Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity* (Bk. v.) is too well known to be reproduced. Bishop Andrews in the beginning of the seventeenth century speaks of men "ever to these writings yeelding the next place after the Canon of the Scriptures and preferring them before all forraine writers whatsoever" (Sermons: *Of the worshipping of the Imaginations*, bk. 31, ed. 1641).

The value, however, of the Apocrypha for purposes of public reading was vehemently denounced by the Puritan party. Their dread was lest by the indiscriminate reading of canonical and apocryphal books in Church the people should become confused in their minds as to the true Canon of the Old Testament, and should draw no distinction between the canonical writings and those which the Church did not "apply to establish any doctrine." For this apprehension they had reason enough. The people were not well educated; the

history of the Canon of Scripture showed that popular usage proved in process of time to be decisive upon the question of the limits of the Canon; the Council of Trent had declared the whole of the Vulgate to be equally canonical.

Doubtless the Puritan party imported into the controversy unnecessary heat. At the Hampton Court Conference, James I. exclaimed, "What, trow ye, make these men so angry with Ecclesiasticus? By my soul, I think he was a bishop, or else they would never use him so."

The extent to which this prejudice against the Apocrypha was apt to be pushed may be exemplified from the writings of H. Broughton, a distinguished scholar of a somewhat acrid temperament. "The wicked of the world," he says, "will bring in the wicked Apocrypha to disturb the glory of both Testaments." "That Church which first banisheth the wicked Apocrypha from the Holy Bible will first find true glory from God." (H. Broughton's Works, ed. 1662, 2nd pt. 206, 651).

It was not a century renowned for generous concessions. At the Savoy Conference the Bishops, among whom were the renowned Cosin of Durham, Gauden of Exeter, Sanderson of Lincoln, Bryan Walton of Chester, replied to the appeal against the reading of the Apocrypha with some tartness: "If notwithstanding this sufficiency (*i.e.* the sufficiency of Holy Scripture) sermons be necessary, there is no

reason why these Apocryphal chapters should not be as useful, most of them containing excellent discourses, and rules of morality. It is heartily to be wished that sermons were as good. If their fear be that by this mean, those books may come to be of equal esteem with the Canon, they may be secured against that by the title which the Church hath put upon them, calling them Apocryphal. And it is the Church's testimony, which teacheth us this difference, and to leave them out were to cross the practice of the Church in former ages." Thus was the appeal summarily dismissed: while the lesson from the book of Bel and the Dragon was remorselessly reinserted in the Calendar of Lessons.

But time has its revenges. The Revised Lectionary of 1870 left only a few lessons from the Apocrypha, taken from the books of Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, and Baruch. It had become evident that the reading aloud of many portions of the Apocrypha violated good taste, and that public opinion asked for a freer selection from the Canonical Scriptures and for a more limited representation of the Apocryphal writings.

On the other hand, the retention of a certain number of passages from the Apocrypha has maintained the principle upon which our Church has consistently taken its stand. Few would have the hardihood to deny the beauty and the force

of the portions which we shall read from the Apocrypha in this and the coming month. Few, who give thought to the matter at all, will be found to deny what a privilege it is thus to maintain in public worship the historical custom of reading from these books, which Reformers and Fathers alike closely studied, and which our brethren in Greek and Roman Christendom have always retained in their copies of the Holy Scripture.

On the other hand the freedom and independence of English Church usage have been upheld. If the retention of particular apocryphal lessons was contrary to the interests of decorum in public worship, it was clear that no rigid rule of tradition ought to be interposed to prevent the exercise of a wise discretion.

It was possible to limit the use, without impairing the significance, of the 'Apocrypha' in our lectionary. This has been loyally effected; and the lectionary, whatever may be its defects, has taken away many causes of stumbling, while it has preserved intact the seal of antiquity. Perhaps in process of time the gradual influence of public opinion may in a similar way lead to the disuse, in public worship, of the singing or recitation of language of which the tone is out of harmony with the devotional thought of Christian life.

Setting aside the question of the value of these books for purposes of public reading, we may now

turn to the subject of their value to Christian study. And it is from this point of view that a strong plea may be urged for a revival of interest in them.

The books have most undeservedly dropped out of sight. The name 'Apocrypha' is unquestionably largely responsible for this. The 'Apocrypha' is popularly supposed to consist of 'apocryphal' material; and 'apocryphal' being commonly identified with 'supposititious' or 'fictitious,' it is commonly imagined that the 'Apocrypha' literature is unworthy of thoughtful study. It is the old story of giving a dog a bad name.

But in this case the bad name 'Apocrypha' is but an unfortunate and accidental title, which originally denoted writings of "secret character" or "unknown authorship," but which, from Jerome's day, grew to be the mere label applied to the miscellaneous group of "ecclesiastical books" that were read in the Churches, but were not included in the strict limits of the Hebrew Canon of Scripture.

No one will dispute the general inferiority of the Apocrypha in spiritual force and literary excellence, to the majority of the Canonical books. But their value and importance will never cease to be appreciated by Biblical students, or indeed by any thoughtful readers who can realise the significance of a collection of Jewish books, drawn from the two centuries preceding the Christian era and the first century of the Christian era.

These books illustrate the structure of the writings of the Old Testament: they throw light upon the history of the chosen people at one of its most important epochs: they unfold the growth of religious thought among the Jewish people in Palestine and Egypt, just before, and at the time of, the Ministry of our Lord.

The more the Church realises that the Canon of Scripture was only gradually arrived at, that its books were selected from the religious literature of the people, the more profoundly will it understand the value of such writings as Ecclesiasticus and 1st Book of Maccabees, which for a time must have been put forward as claimants for recognition in the Hebrew Canon.

The Canonical books of Scripture are drawn from the life of the Jewish nation, and from the Apostolic generation. The collection of writings which saw the light during the last phase in the ratification of the Old Testament Canon demands from Christian readers something more of attentive study than they have received in England during the present century.

(*a*) A study of the Apocrypha will instructively illustrate the problems presented by the literature of the Old Testament. To give but a few examples: the reader of the book of Baruch will find that it consists of two different works welded together, but easily distinguishable by general differences of style, and by distinctive use of the sacred name. A careful

study of the 1st Book of Maccabees will show that the writer sedulously avoids the use of the sacred name, and thus suggests comparison with the writer of Esther, in which book the sacred name does not occur. The problems of different texts which beset the student in such books as Jeremiah, or the books of Samuel, or the latter part of Exodus, meet us in the books of Tobit and Judith, where two or three recensions are found existing side by side.

Such instances of material for literary criticism taken from writers of such recent date, composed in so civilised a time, should remind us that the Canonical books may not improbably present similar problems, dating from a period before their especially sacred position had been finally recognised by the determination of their canonicity, and awaiting solution at the hands of literary criticism.

Again, from the merely linguistic side, the study of these books is bound up with that of the Septuagint, the version so repeatedly employed by the writers of the New Testament. The language of these books is, so to speak, in immediate touch with that of the New Testament. We stand in the presence of the Hellenistic Jew, midway between the Prophet and the Apostle.

(*b*) There are books of the Apocrypha which describe one of the most heroic chapters in the world's history. The Swiss War of Liberty and the Rise of the Dutch Republic are alone com-

parable, for pure patriotism and religious fervour, with the great struggle of the Maccabean War. The detailed references to the kings of Syria and Egypt, contained in the Apocalyptic language of Dan. xi., are, as it were, continued in the simple narrative of the 1st Book of Maccabees, and in the more rhetorical pages of the 2nd Book of Maccabees. Without some knowledge of that struggle, that triumph of Judaism and repulse of Hellenism, the literature, the thought, the history of the Jews in the following century are unintelligible. In that epoch you see the patriot, who sought to lay the foundations of a Davidic kingdom and a Zadokite High-Priesthood upon the victories that had been won by the point of the sword and by the cleverness of a shrewd diplomacy. In that epoch you see the patriot dying rather than pollute the Sabbath by taking up weapons of defence: "they chose rather to die, that they might not be defiled with meats and that they might not profane the holy covenant" (1 Macc. i. 63). Sadducee and Pharisee take their rise in that contest. The narrowness of Judaism ran into these two moulds. The victory of Judith over Holophernes is the antithesis to the triumphs of Judas, of Jonathan, and of Simon. Ceremonial purity claimed to be a mightier defence for the Israel of God than the armies of the Asmonean princes.

Again, the student of the history of that time must turn to Ecclesiasticus to find there the picture

of daily life and its social weaknesses; to find maxims of commercial and domestic virtue; to see the scribe installed in his place of honour among the people; and to recognise the importance attached to habits of prayer, of charity, of almsgiving, of purity and truth.

(*c*) Lastly, I have only time to advert but very briefly to the manner and degree in which the books of the Apocrypha illustrate the progress of Jewish religious thought.

Here the most obvious instance is presented by the treatment of the subject of the Resurrection. This doctrine which appears so slightly in the Old Testament, is in the New Testament times a subject of division between the conservative Sadducee and the popular Pharisee Rabbi. There is no mention of this doctrine in Ecclesiasticus or in the Sadducee writing of 1 Maccabees. But if we turn to the Pharisee work of 2 Maccabees, or to the 4th Book of Maccabees, we see how strongly the teaching of the Resurrection has fastened itself upon the mind of the writers. Akin to this is the development of the idea of personal immortality which is taught in noble and striking language by the Alexandrian writer of the Book of Wisdom.—The Apocalypse of Esdras, like that of Baruch, is the outcome of the catastrophe which the Apocalypse of St. John anticipates, and offers a remarkable study of eschatology.

The doctrine of Angels receives in 2 Maccabees and Tobit an expansion which prepares us for the later theories of the rabbinic teachers, and heralds the appearance of those Judæo-gnostic speculations against which St. Paul protests.

In regard to Messianic teaching the books of the Apocrypha startle us by the absence of any reference to the expectation of a personal Messiah. We have to bear in mind that the greater portion of our Apocrypha had its origin in Alexandria, where the Messianic hope was apt to become absorbed in the more abstract regions of mystic thought; while in Palestine the victories of the Asmonean house had connected the Messianic age of the prophets with the glories of reigning princes.

There were, as we know from the book of Enoch, from the Psalms of Solomon, and the "Nunc Dimittis" of Simeon, some pious souls who took a loftier and more spiritual view of the Messianic hope. But they were few in number who looked for the consolation in Israel from any other quarter but military success, or philosophic calm, or legal ritualism.

It is easy for us to exclaim at the ineptitudes of Bel and the Dragon, at the wearisome and distended rhetoric that defaces the close of the Book of Wisdom, the Epistle of Jeremiah, and the 4th Book of the Maccabees. But they reflect one aspect of the Judaism amidst which Christ was

born. No writing throwing light upon the religious condition of His fellow-countrymen can be set aside by us with disdain. He compared His nation to the fig-tree with abundant foliage and without fruit. Nor should we be surprised to find the barrenness which marks some of the writings of the Apocrypha.

The development which can be traced through the Canonical Scriptures leads downwards to the lifeless monotheism which in its own turn became almost the idolatry of the Jewish race, and upwards to the spiritual teaching of those men of Israel who were quickened unto a new life by the Revelation of the Father's Love through Jesus Christ.

. . . . . .

"Man," said Richard Cecil (*Remains*, p. 361) "is a creature of extremes. The middle path is generally the wise path, but there are few wise enough to find it. The Papist puts the Apocrypha into the Canon, the Protestant will scarcely regard it as an ancient record." Enough for us that the Apocrypha forms part of the literature of the age, upon which the Wisdom and the Love of God descended in the form of a servant. The Apocrypha, much as men despise it, formed as it were part of the air which He deigned to breathe. How need we say more of its "value"? The truth about the time and the people into which He was born must be scrutinised from every aspect. The literature of the Apocrypha furnishes one such aspect. In the

history of all histories we cannot afford to ignore the witness of this group of writings.

"Strive for the truth unto death; and the Lord shall fight for thee" (Eccles. iv. 28).

The words which have often been appealed to at Church Congresses, aye, and on many mightier platforms, are derived from the least historical portion in that strange compilation, the 1st Book of Esdras, "Magna est Veritas et prævalebit" (iv. 41).

μεγάλη ἡ ἀλήθεια καὶ ὑπερισχύει.

VIII

THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH[1]

"When he the Spirit of truth is come, he shall guide you into all the truth."—JOHN xvi. 13.

IT is no accidental circumstance that on the three Sundays which precede Ascension Day the Gospel is taken from the same chapter in St. John's Gospel. It was in the days between the Resurrection and the Ascension that the disciples learned something of the meaning of the promise of the Paraclete, and heard the last of the Beatitudes pronounced upon those "that have not seen and yet have believed."

So well had they learned the lesson which their Master had taught them, that, after His Ascension, after He had been parted from them, they returned to Jerusalem "with joy." How changed had they become from the day—but six weeks previously—when, because of His announcement that He was

[1] Preached before the University, St. Mary's, Cambridge, on the 4th Sunday after Easter, May 15, 1892.

going from them, sorrow had filled their heart! Now they rejoiced, and their joy no man could take from them. The secret of their joy lay not merely in their quickened faith and heightened love, but in the consciousness of the indwelling Spirit, wherewith the Saviour had endowed both them and all the Church, as He breathed on them and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost."

That gift was made to the whole Church—it was bestowed for all time—a gift so great, so amazing, and yet so hidden to earthly eye, that a miraculous pledge of that Spiritual Presence was mercifully granted to convince the doubtful and to encourage the faint-hearted. The seal of its Divine reality, the demonstration of its supernatural power, was the Pentecostal outpouring—a sign which all could recognise, to which all could bear witness, while it symbolised the new brotherhood of mankind, and the function of the Church to proclaim to all the world the Kingdom of Christ.

The gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church has never been withdrawn. If we fail to recognise its presence and to estimate its true significance, we shut our eyes to the brightest privilege of our heavenly calling; we turn our backs upon that teaching of the Holy Trinity, to which the Church attained after generations of perplexing controversy; we invite despondency to overwhelm us, as we think of the future; we acquiesce in the separation by

which brethren in Christ are often needlessly, and never except injuriously, severed from one another.

This is the teaching of the present season. And it is this thought of the Spirit of Truth, whom the Saviour Himself hath given and who will guide us into the truth, that I desire to call to your remembrance.

Let us never lose hold of the thought that we live now in the Dispensation of the Spirit. He belonged not only to the Apostolic Church; He did not manifest Himself only before the separation of Eastern and Western Christendom. Nay, not only in the great epochs of the past, but ever, unceasingly, the Presence of the Eternal Spirit has been with the Church. For "God hath given the Holy Ghost to them that obey Him."

Many who are perplexed by the discordant voices of earthly champions of Christendom, know not where to turn, and some seek a refuge for their troubled souls in the quiet haven of a renounced responsibility. And yet our Saviour gave the promise of the Spirit, that His followers might be enabled to overcome the very perils which in this age, if ever, seem to beset us.

If we once give way to the imagination that our God is more the God of the past than of the present, we should indeed open the gate to blackest despair.

That God is with us, was the hope and belief of the Hebrew Prophets. That God is with us, was

the Gospel of the Incarnation. That God is with us still, is the witness of the Spirit, the Spirit whom Christ hath sent.

Through the Spirit it is that the Church is a living and growing society, and not the mechanical organisation of an expedient philanthropy. Through the Spirit it is that the Sacraments are life-giving means of grace, and not mere barren memorials. Through the Spirit it is that Holy Scripture speaks to the souls of men with the voice of God, and is to our Church the one Rule of Faith and final standard of all Christian doctrine. If we attain to this belief, happy are we if we abide in it! Thanks be to God, who is greater than our hearts! For, though our faith wavers, though our spiritual vision be dimmed, though, through trouble, doubt, or temptation, what we had seen we can for the time see no longer distinctly, the promise of the Lord standeth sure. Not according to our feelings is His mercy; nor are our changeful thoughts the measure of His love. The Spirit of the Lord guideth us. "Guideth": for the progress, the movement, is presupposed; and if we will have aught of the Divine guidance, He will be our guide upon the path that leadeth unto eternal truth.

And at this point we meet with an apparent difficulty, which arises from the words used in the Gospel according to St. John (vii. 39):—"But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on

him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified." It is evident both from that passage and from this sixteenth chapter that it was only after the Lord's Resurrection that the Personal Presence of the Divine Spirit could be realised; nor does it appear to have been compatible with the historic manifestation of our Lord upon earth.

But while we may infer that the abiding Presence of the Spirit was not vouchsafed until after the Resurrection, there is no warrant for the supposition that the Holy Spirit was not immanent in human life before the Incarnation. Such a conclusion would be but an example of the confusion that is apt to arise from reliance upon a single text rather than upon the testimony of Scripture as a whole. For we are surely rather taught to believe that in every age from the foundation of the world, the operation of the Holy Spirit has moved in the progress of mankind, and has been the source of all that has moved our sympathy, kindled our admiration, in the records of antiquity or in the memorials of heathen nations. "The Spirit" moved upon the face of that primæval chaos from which the order of more modern things has been evolved. From the first, the Spirit of God strove with men, and has borne Its witness in the foundation and in the formation of human conscience, whether in civilisation or in barbarism. Who that thinks of this Divine witness in

the history of mankind will not recognise the fitness which has linked with the Gospel of the day that Evangel for the universe contained in the words of the Epistle: "Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights"?

It is but a narrow version of the Christian Creed which would deny the influence of the Divine Spirit, wherever aught that is pure and honest and lovely has been known and seen! God left not Himself without witness!—all that purifies and elevates, all that strengthens and instructs, in the teaching of a Gautama, a Confucius, a Socrates, testifies to the presence of God in the world of the human Spirit, testifies to the presence of the Divine Spirit, as in the present, so also in the generations that are past.

But pre-eminently we have learned to connect that Presence and that Power with the race from which the Saviour came, "born of the seed of David, according to the flesh." It was the Spirit that "spake by the prophets." The faith which receives the Divinity of Christ discerns in the Scriptures of the Jews the unfolding of the Divine message. The records of the Old Covenant did not merely instruct a "peculiar people" in the righteousness of monotheism: they heralded the approach, they prepared the way for the coming of the Saviour of the world.

No other view of Jewish Scripture is present to the mind of Christ. No other view is present to

the minds of the Apostles. It is this thought of the Jewish Scriptures which caused them to be appropriated by the earliest Christian communities as the first instalment of the Christian Bible.

Wholly alien to the spirit of the Church has been that phase of Gnostic thought which, as exemplified in the instance of Marcion, has endeavoured altogether to banish the writings of the Old Testament, and to sever the bond which links the Christian Church with its historic antecedents. So often as it reappears, so often, I believe, will the phantom of Marcion be ejected by the sense of Christendom. The wish to dissociate Christianity from the History of Israel and from all influence of the Spirit embodied in the Old Testament, is founded upon a complete misconception of Christianity. Sprung doubtless from reverence, but fruitful in every sort of superstition, it has laboured to separate Christ from the history of mankind, and, while interpreting His Incarnation solely as the Birth of the Son of God, to ignore it as the Birth of Him who was also the Son of Man, born of a pure Virgin.

"The salvation" for which Israel had longed and hoped, is "from the Jews"; those words of our Lord have an untold significance. The position of the Christ in the history of the Jews corresponds as much to the consummation of the old order, as it does to the foundation of the new.

The same Spirit, that Christ has sent unto His

Church, pervaded with His power the witness of the Old Testament. Dimly, fragmentarily, partially, but tenderly, truly, really, were the outlines of the kingdom drawn, the shadow of the sufferings of the Christ, and the rays of the glory that should follow. As He gave up His life on the Cross, the veil was rent; the barrier was broken down.

In the facts of the Incarnation and the Crucifixion the union was restored; and the communion of the Divine Spirit with the Spirit of man was perfected, actually on the side of the Divine love, and potentially on the side of man, by Him who is the Divine, but no less the Human Representative of our earthly race.

It is at this point that it is needful to notice an objection which many, in the present day, are tempted to raise. They feel that, in the results of modern investigation (whether they are eventually to obtain recognition on an extended or a modified scale, matters not here) an obstacle has been raised against the teaching of the Inspiration of the Scriptures. These books, whose human structure is being dissected, how can they any longer be termed the work of the Spirit of Truth? And the anxiety and perplexity into which many have been thrown, belong to the penalty which has ever been exacted from mankind, in cases where assumptions have been treated as ascertained facts, or, at least, as presumably removed from the necessity of verification. Perhaps

there has been no more common, and no more unfortunate, assumption than that which has tacitly associated the thought of Inspiration with particular views upon the authorship and structure of the books, views that were liable at any time to be upset.

Whether the teachings of criticism, that still appear so novel to many, be accepted or rendered acceptable in a more or less modified form, their discussion will at least have conferred one signal service, if it compels the Christian student to face the thought of Inspiration upon its own merits, in a direct and masculine manner, instead of reducing it to a mere side issue of literary history.

The difficulties now uppermost in the talk and in the literature of the day are not new. So far as the subject of Inspiration is concerned, they have always existed in the case of the Historical Books. They confront us in the admittedly composite origin of the Psalter; they confront us in the problems which meet us as to the authorship of Ecclesiastes, of Daniel, and of the Song of Songs. But the teaching of Inspiration is not for one moment affected by the conclusions, at which the best scholars seem to have arrived. To take but a single instance, the book of Isaiah. Whether the work of one author, of two, or of ten: does this literary question affect its message to the Church, its message to the world? What it was, that it is; what it contained, that it contains, before and after the ascertainment of its literary

structure. The life is there, the life, as we believe, of the Spirit of God; the dissection of the letter neither betrays the secret of the life, nor renders the acknowledgment of its presence unreasonable, supported, as it is, by the abundant witness of experience.

And here another objection presents itself, which is based upon the supposition of the absolute "inerrancy" of Inspired Scripture. How, it is asked, can the gift of Inspiration by the Spirit of Truth be compatible with the alleged errors, or imperfections, few and far between though they may be, which may be found in the pages of the Bible? Doubtless, if the admission were made, that there is no element of human imperfection in that which is inspired, we should find it difficult to find any reply; and we know how, in past times, this same hypothesis has given rise to the most forced interpretations. But that which was tacitly assumed was precisely the point that required to be proved. Our conception of Inspiration must be based upon the reasonable interpretation of the sacred writings; we cannot invert the process and argue from the unknown to the known.

And if details in matters of science, of history, and the like, show signs of human imperfection, if errors here and there are laid bare, whether discrepancies in the Gospel narratives, or variations in the Books of Chronicles from the Books of Kings, or defective knowledge of science, we need not conclude that the Scriptures are not inspired, but that the gift

of Inspiration did not raise the function of authorship beyond the limits of human frailty in these respects.

Surely we instinctively recognise the reasonableness of this. To take but two cases: our belief in the Inspiration of St. Matthew's Gospel does not hinge upon the question whether or not he really referred to Jeremiah when he should have written Zechariah;[1] nor does our belief in the inspiration of St. Luke's Gospel turn upon the problem of his accuracy in ascribing a "census" to the date of the governorship of Quirinius.[2]

And again, the frank recognition of the limitations which bound the operation of the Divine gift upon the inspired writers, explains many a mystery in Holy Writ. The very progress now so generally realised both in the moral teaching and in the religious conceptions of the Old Testament, witnesses to the presence of limitation; nor is there any ground for restricting it to the field of moral and spiritual thought.

Once more, the testimony of the Books themselves shows that the writers were conscious of human effort in collecting the material for the books. The Divine guidance did not preclude the necessity of human industry. Nor is it possible to assume that, where the authors have incorporated other writings, there had been special intervention in the composition of the sources from which they were borrowed.

[1] Matt. xxvii. 9. [2] Luke, ii. 2.

The gift of Inspiration is no mechanical deification of earthly powers. The Spirit has ever employed earthly agency. Only to the Divine Master was the Spirit given "without measure"; and He Himself bequeathed no written command.

While then we recognise earthly limitation in *writers*, let us not be hasty to deny the possibility of its presence in their *writings*. Let us be ready to receive the words of life, without "offering sacrifice" to those who make it known. They were "men of like passions" with us, and they "bring to us good tidings." Even when this is known, with difficulty is the multitude withstrained from doing sacrifice to a Paul and a Barnabas, to a Moses and an Isaiah (cf. Acts, xiv. 13-18).

And yet it is only when this is freely and frankly admitted that the Christian student can grapple upon terms of perfect fairness with the difficulties of Biblical exegesis.

Unquestionably, this view causes many to stumble, on the one side or the other. And while some would prefer to shut their eyes and to assume that nothing of human imperfection can be seen in Holy Scripture, others complain that the admission seems to them to be fatal to the very idea of Inspiration in the writings. They will admit its presence, maybe, in the thought and in the teaching, but not in the writings. Such an attitude marks the reaction against the more rigid and mechanical view of verbal Inspiration which was

once in vogue. But surely it is a vain endeavour to winnow the ideas from the words, or to separate the Inspiration of the writing from the written letter. The apostle St. Paul we believe to have been filled with the Holy Spirit when he wrote his Epistles, and those Epistles contain the most formal and conventional salutations as well as the most lofty heights of spiritual instruction. No view of Inspiration would tolerate the selection of picked beautiful passages for the vehicle of Divine power. Nay, rather, it is just this feature which enables us to gather a juster conception of Inspiration. It is not that which partitions off national and individual life into chambers of sacred things and secular things. It is not that which regards national history as unconnected with spiritual growth, nor even trivial events as independent of spiritual significance. All life passes beneath the influence of the Spirit.

We cannot hope, in this difficult topic, to meet all objections and overcome all difficulties. But we may believe and trust that we are being guided into the truth. And when we hear it said that the teaching of Inspiration is but an ecclesiastical invention, when we hear it ridiculed as a mere superstition, we have no need to shrink from the position that we take up. To us it is a most reasonable belief; there *are* those to whom it may rightly appear the merest fancy.

The disciple, whose very life hinges upon the

Revelation of God in Christ, finds ample ground for his belief in the Inspiration of Scripture. The utterances of his Divine Lord and Master respecting the Scriptures of the Jews are enough for him; he knows of a certainty that they testify of Jesus, and that they contain the words of eternal life. He finds in the promise of the Saviour and in the powers granted to the Apostolic generation the basis of his confidence in the special hallowing of the witness of the New Testament writings.

Nor need we shrink from the appeal to internal grounds. To us, to the Church of Christ, the Scriptures are inspired because they have made known to us the Father's Will, because they have been to us the power of God over conscience and over life. Our belief in inspiration rests upon no outward testimony. None have described its process, nor recorded the methods of its influence. It is unintelligible to those who have put away from them the idea of a God manifesting Himself to mankind through the powers of human nature. It rests on the supernatural. And the best evidence to it is found in the consciousness of the Church and in the experience of spiritual life. If your Scriptures are not to you the inspired teaching of the Spirit, then no authority of Church or creed or council can render them so to you. "The Church's full recognition did not make the Bible God's work or God's word,"[1] though the

[1] Liddon.

witness of the Church confirms the testimony of the Spirit. To put it in a few words: the claim of Inspiration stands or falls with the Divine character of our religion. The belief in it rests on the belief in the one Perfect Revelation through Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, as ever, the Spirit of Truth teaches us by the Word of Scripture. Centuries have not dimmed the brightness of the lamp of truth. And the same Spirit which enriched the writers with that spiritual inspiration is present now to the students of its message. . . . And it will guide them into all truth if they will humbly, prayerfully, honestly, commit themselves to that guidance; if they are prepared, no less, to move forward upon the path along which they are summoned. The duty is never removed from the minister of Christ to preach the Word. The necessity is ever laid upon him to exhort his brethren, that they be equipped with the sword of the Spirit. And surely in this place, if anywhere, there never should be weariness in reiterating the exhortation. There never should be reluctance in enforcing the old lesson, to study the Scriptures, to exercise ourselves therein daily, prayerfully, and laboriously.

The temptation to neglect the duty is nowhere perhaps more strong. I do not mean merely on account of the distractions of the place, which are ever leading men astray, inducing them to discontinue habits of devotion, urging them to renounce the

responsibilities of their spiritual nature. I mean that we have many among us who deliberately put away from them the effort demanded by Biblical study; they are satisfied with manuals of devotion, or they think they can be filled with religious knowledge from the streams of passing talk or shallow emotion.

There are those who put away from them the conscientious study of Scripture, because of the demand it makes upon their time. To specialise in the teaching of the Spirit belongs, they think, to the clergy only, or to students of divinity.

There are those who give themselves to the study of special passages, of choice and beautiful texts, deriving indeed a blessing to their souls, but neglecting the wider teaching which nowadays lies within the grasp of every aspiring student of the Word.

It may be the hurry of modern life, it may be the superficial character of our religious convictions; but, whatever the cause may be, it is only too true that on every side ignorance of Scripture is the chief cause of complaint concerning those who present themselves for Ordination. Let us admit that the very excellences of Scripture are an obstacle to its thorough study. Its teaching cannot be got by heart. Its knowledge does not lend itself to rapid acquisition. Still, to no class of man should its study be more precious, more necessary, and more profitable than to those who are gathered together within a University. The teachings of the universe, the wisdom of the ages, are

in this place unfolded before the vision of quickened imagination and ripening wisdom. Shall not the teaching of the Spirit complete the circle of education, and fit the man for the duties of the citizenship, both of that which he has inherited as an Englishman, and of that into which he is called by Christ? Not of earth alone, nor of man alone, but of God and of His love towards mankind, do we need the quickening instruction.

Nor need we doubt that the very difficulties of Biblical criticism are co-operating to enhance the value of their Sacred Message. More than ever we learn to trace the progress of the Divine Revelation, and to connect the guidance of the Spirit with the development of a nation's life and a nation's thought. "God's ways are not as our ways." "What we most dread as signs of unbelief," said Maurice twenty-five years ago, "may be His method of scattering unbelief. Theologians and scientific men may both wake up with awe, and say, 'He was in the place and we knew it not'" (*Life*, ii. 501).

Physical science has taught us that man's simple preconceived ideas of the Universe must give way to the working out of age-long processes. Literary science is teaching us that, in the history of our Bibles, its structure is more varied, its composition more gradual, than preconceived ideas had deemed to be possible. It is the Spirit of God which has given to us both the science of the physical researcher

and that of the literary critic. It is the Spirit of Truth which warns and teaches us to see the manifestation of God in ways more gradual, more uniform in their progress, but not a whit less loving, less wise, less all-powerful, than the generations before us supposed. Now in our knowledge of the starry suns, now in our knowledge of some organism of infinite minuteness, now in our knowledge of the growth of the Church, now in our knowledge of the framework of the Scriptures, it is the same Spirit—the Spirit of Truth—gradually guiding us into all the truth. In each life-giving epoch, in each new advance fairly won, let us hail and reverence that Divine Presence. Humbly let us confess our proneness to error, to inconsiderate and hasty judgment. Nowhere shall we find the progress without the retardation; nowhere the light without the shadow; nowhere the new thought without the pride of novelty and the fall of pride; nowhere the attainment without the struggle. Still let us move onward towards the truth, guided by the Spirit, taught by the Word, furnished thereby completely unto every good work. So may God grant to us that when we ask ourselves of the meaning of the Scriptures to our own selves, we may be able to say that they have been unto our souls the very Revelation of God and the very Witness of Christ! Thus "through patience and through comfort of the Scriptures" we shall have that hope that cannot be taken from us.

IX

THE BEST WEAPON[1]

"And David said, There is none like that; give it me."—1 SAMUEL xxi. 9.

IT is essential for a soldier to know what weapon to use, and how to use it. It is a great thing for him to have a weapon which has stood him in good stead in former conflicts. The sword of Goliath of Gath was in the keeping of the High Priest. It was the same with which David had completed his famous victory. When he heard that the High Priest had it there, his soul leaped up; with that in his hand he would have confidence for any encounter. "There is none like that," he cries; "give it me."

As we go forth to the battle of life, we need to be armed with the best weapon. As the armies of the living God move forward to do battle with the forces of evil in the new battlefields of the twentieth century, they need to be armed with the right

[1] Preached at St. Paul's Cathedral, on behalf of the Bible Society, May 6, 1902.

weapon, with one that has been proved and not been found wanting in stern warfare.

There is a famous sword in the armoury of God. There is none like it. It has never been wielded by His saints in vain—keen, unfailing, strong, and true. We in England know it better than others. We have used it: we glory in its possession. Let us glory more in its use, and learn to glory no less in its delivery and distribution among the peoples of the world. You will pardon my allegorising use of David's words. The Word of God in Holy Scripture is a sharp sword; there is none like it. There it lies; you can see its skilful, varied workmanship; you can test its keen edge with your hand; you can breathe on its mirrored surface; your grasp can close over its easy handle. There is none like it; for, more than all this, you know its power. What solace has it not been in hours of darkness! what defence in moments of sudden assault! Has it not chased the spiritual foes? You have known the best folk in the land skilled in its lore. You have seen the saints of God go down into the dark river, and that sword was by their side. It has made the martyr in the flame more than conqueror. It was all the missionary needed in his loneliness among the heathen multitudes.

It was the one weapon of aggressive conquest borne by Christian heroes so different as Livingstone and Gordon, Laurence and Henry Martyn. It is

the voice of the deepest Christian feeling in our land which says, "There is none like that; give it." It is the voice of the heathen calling to us to come and help them, to bring them the sword of the Spirit: "There is none like that: give it unto us." To answer that cry is the work of this great Society.

There was a time, long past, when this weapon of our faith lay, as it were, wrapped up, concealed behind the Ephod, preserved in the keeping of the priests from loss or neglect or destruction, the honoured possession of the priests, not yet entrusted to the hands of the people.

The times have changed. The Scriptures, which owed their preservation to the care of the priesthood, have become the common possession of the world. The epoch of the Reformation has, as its not least significant feature, the transmission of the use of the Christian sword from the hands of the hierarchy into the custody of the people. That freedom of use was the pledge of religious liberty. It threw open wide the doorway of religious knowledge, and many have since entered in thereby.

Many in that age dreaded the profanation of Scripture that might arise from its general use. They urged that it should be kept in the priesthood's charge, that it should be wrapped in the hiding of some authoritative exposition, or sheathed in the old Latin scabbard of a dead and obsolete language.

Risks must be run in battle. The best spirit of Protestantism has never shrunk from this issue. To make the Bible accessible to all, to put the Bible within the reach of the whole world, this has been the hope and, as I believe, the duty, of our Reformed Churches. It was the first step of liberated thought; and the next was like unto it: to claim that not authority, nor preconceived opinion, not words of Councils, Schoolmen, or Fathers, should determine the meaning and exposition of Scripture; but that its sense and purport, its spirit and power, should be determined by the ordinary God-given faculties of thought and reason, study and prayer, intellectual and moral sincerity, trained historical and devotional sympathy. Science may analyse the rays of the sun; history may lay bare the successive stages of a great cathedral. Science will not dim the light of day, nor history interfere with the function of a sacred building. When truth has a fair field, it will prevail. The Bible has nothing to fear in a land that is true to the principles of our Protestant Reformed religion. Learning cannot hurt, nor science impair, its message; nay, Learning and Science bring their offerings, and add lustre and life to the Witness of Revelation.

I speak as one who, for a quarter of a century, has worked at Biblical study upon the lines of the so-called Higher Criticism; and I will not for one moment admit that the old methods of free inquiry,

which are the honour of our Reformation period, have in any sense lost their virtue. The Bible deserves none but the best learning of the day. The courage of Erasmus and Colet and Tyndale can still live to the glory of God; can still be consecrated to the service of the Master. "There is none like that," are words that the modern Christian student can echo with unfeigned conviction. We will not leave our Sword wrapped in the half-knowledge of earlier centuries; nor encased in the sheath of any timid superstition. Polished for modern use, sharpened by the best of human learning, it shall still be the Christian's strongest weapon, mighty to cast down the strongholds of evil, to maintain the rule of Christ upon earth.

Well am I aware that there are those who have brought modern study into odium and suspicion by wild assumptions, by that arrogance of learning which imposes upon the world its transient intuitions as confidently, as if they were equivalent to scientifically ascertained results. Unreasonableness—whether in motionless traditionalism, or in the vagaries of unbalanced caprice—brings its own nemesis. Biblical study suffers; and the cause of the best weapon of the Christian Church is dragged into disrepute.

It is, I think, significant of the best spirit of Christian scholarship that this great Society decided, on October 9, 1901, to circulate the English Revised

Version concurrently with the Authorised Version of the Bible. This was a move harmonising with the courage and wisdom of our great English Biblical scholars. As one who is privileged to occupy the See of Exeter, where Miles Coverdale was Bishop, I am glad on this occasion to echo the approbation which has everywhere greeted the action of the Bible Society. To my mind the announcement came as a fitting recognition of the Biblical work of a generation now, alas! nearly gone from us. "I am content," said Bishop Westcott, ten years ago, "to appeal to the next generation for a just judgment on the new Revision." The grave had only for a few weeks closed over our prophet-teacher, when the Council of the Bible Society decided that this great aid for the accurate understanding and interpretation of the Scriptures should not be excluded from its world-wide agencies of distribution.

To all of us that version is the reminder that we in England use not the original, but a translation; that our English version is a translation equally with a Telegu, a Chinese, or a Swahili version; that the spirit of the original is that which every servant of Christ needs to strive to acquire. No version can be final; language is continually altered; scholarship continually improves. Jerome, Ulphilas, Luther, Beza, Tyndale—time bears all its sons away—their work is not forgotten, their memory is honoured. But each age has its task, and not

least is the duty and the work to promote the cause of Bible knowledge and to spread its use.

I believe it has been the English Bible which in no slight measure has helped to make England great. The spirit of the great Teutonic races and of the English-speaking peoples has favoured the spread of the Bible throughout the world. And among the greatest men of our own country there have been conspicuously many who searched the Scriptures, and made no secret of it that in character and wisdom they were built up upon the foundation of Scripture teaching. A French traveller asks why it is that the Colonies of New Zealand and Tasmania and Australia are so wise and so practical. And he makes answer: "In my opinion it must be attributed chiefly to their habitual reading of the Holy Scriptures and their thorough acquaintance with their contents. Hence come the great ideas of the Fatherhood of God, of His Righteousness, of His Providence, which shape those faithful and constant souls which we call characters. And to what do we owe their strength of principle, if not to the Bible, their great teacher?" "We almost tremble," adds Bishop Westcott after quoting this, "as we hear the sentences; for in those very countries to which reference is made, the authority of this great teacher is even now imperilled."

As for the countries, so for the Churches.

Ceremonial changes from age to age; liturgical usages alter. Climate, and country, and time, make themselves felt. Behind all the Christian Churches is the Holy Scripture. There is no Christian community that does not appeal to, there is none whose vitality does not seem dependent on, the value which it sets upon this sacred possession.

The paramount position of Holy Scripture must ever continue to be the distinctive principle of our Church. And until Rome has learned that first article of our Reformation, there can be no hope, there should be no talk, of reunion. The paramount position of Holy Scripture in Christian doctrine and in national life—it is because we are agreed in that, that we should never despair in England of a far closer approximation between the Church of England and the great Nonconformist communities.

It is not criticism, nor liberalism of thought, that constitute any real peril to the influence of the Bible over the thought of the coming age. It is not superstition, nor priestcraft, that will form any lasting obstacle to its dissemination over the globe, to its hold over the peoples of the world. It is rather the indolence, which in the hurry of modern life will save itself the trouble of reading and studying Holy Scripture; it is the indifference to things of God, to the very thought of God, which will resign the use of the sword into the keeping of the priest, which

will seize upon any pretext of hearsay objections or half-understood arguments.

If men and women cannot fix their thoughts upon anything better than the passion for wealth, or amusement, or excitement, it is not likely they will care much for the Bible. The simplicity of the converts in the Missionary field is at once our encouragement and our reproach. The splendid record of the Bible Society stimulates us to greater efforts. Nearly twenty thousand more complete Bibles were issued during the last year than in any previous year. This noble agency for good draws near to the celebration of its centenary. May God bless the seed sown by it, and make the first year of the new century auspicious for the remainder of its course, as a true handmaid of the Church of Christ, and a faithful dispenser of the Word of God! For all Churches alike may the Bible more and more be the one standard of true doctrine, the great bulwark against visionary and obscurantist accretions, the pledge of the simplicity of faith, and the chief weapon of Christian progress and of Christian conquest! The sword of the Word! When the Sovereign is to be crowned, the Holy Scriptures will be laid upon the Holy Table, and from thence taken and placed in the hands of the newly crowned King. The words that shall then be uttered express the will of a Bible-loving people and a Bible-loving Church:—"Our Gracious Sovereign! We present

you with this Book, the most valuable thing that the world affords. Here is Wisdom; this is the Royal Law; these are the lively Oracles of God. Blessed is he that readeth and they that keep the words of this Book; that keep and do the things contained in it. For these are the words of Eternal Life, able to make you wise and happy in this World, nay, wise unto Salvation; and so happy for evermore, through Faith which is in Christ Jesus." As we hear these words, we may say, for King and for people: "It is the sword of the Spirit; there is none like that: give it me."

X

ONE OF ENGLAND'S TALENTS[1]

"Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things."—MATTHEW XXV. 23.

IN the Parable of the Talents Our Saviour teaches us the spiritual truth that he who makes a right use of the gifts that God has given him will be rewarded with the exercise of greater responsibility.

God's gifts to you are a trust and a responsibility. Life, liberty, health, education, influence, these are gifts that lay on you a burden of responsibility. It will depend on your use of them, whether your reward shall be the increase of your glorious field of work for God, or the loss, by atrophy, of the means by which your life could glorify Him.

Amongst the gifts for the use of which we in Great Britain are responsible and have to be thankful, must ever be ranked the Bible in the vernacular.

[1] Preached on behalf of the Bible Society, at Exeter Cathedral, October 27, 1901.

This is no mere cheap phrase taken from the commonplaces of petty controversy. The English Bible, whether for its influence in the literature of the land, or for its recognised and indispensable position in the education of the nation, deserves to be regarded even by those who, having renounced their faith, are counted the foes of religion, among the noblest heritages to which Englishmen are born. In our Church Scripture holds a unique position. It is the one final standard for doctrine. It is for the Church the one indispensable witness to Christ. Nothing shares with it its authority. Jeremy Taylor says, "That the Scriptures do need a suppletory, that they are not perfect and sufficient unto salvation of themselves, is the πρῶτον ψεῦδος."

Even the Creeds, says our VIIIth Article, are to be received and believed "because they may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture." The position which was assigned to the Scriptures by the Fathers was reaffirmed by the Reformers and the great English divines. "To urge anything," says Hooker, "as part of that supernaturally and celestially revealed truth which God hath taught, and not to show it in Scripture; this did the ancient Fathers evermore think unlawful, impious, execrable." The belief of the Church in the Holy Scriptures is no blind veneration for ancient and sacred writings, caught from the study of the Fathers and Schoolmen. It springs from the intense conviction that

these writings contain a constant Divine Revelation, and that there is nothing to be brought into comparison with them.

That Revelation of God is of unceasing force. The Spirit still speaks by Scripture. Its truths and teaching are only slowly apprehended. It is a treasure-house whose riches are inexhaustible. It contains resources of infinite development, as "the old truths are viewed in the light of new facts." The writings, which had been collected and prized and set apart by the Church, became the witness of the Divine Voice constantly speaking in her midst, by which alone the decisions of Councils and the sentences of the Doctors and the Confessions of the Churches could be rightly tested. This explains the position of the New Testament and Bible in our Liturgy. It is a copy of the Scriptures, not of the Articles or the Liturgy, which the Bishop delivers to each candidate for Deacon's and Priest's Orders. Nothing contrary to them is he to teach: they are to be the main study of his life. At the Consecration of a Bishop the same commands are repeated with impressive solemnity.

In the eventful moment of our country's history when a new Sovereign ascends the throne, and is crowned at the great Abbey of Westminster, the Holy Scriptures are laid upon the Holy Table, and from thence are taken and placed in the hands of the newly crowned Sovereign, while the will of the

nation is expressed in the words of the service appointed for the occasion :—

"Our Gracious Sovereign! We present you with this Book, the most valuable thing that the world affords. Here is Wisdom; this is the Royal Law; these are the lively Oracles of God. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that keep the words of this Book; that keep and do the things contained in it. For these are the words of Eternal Life, able to make you wise and happy in this World, nay, wise unto Salvation; and so happy for evermore, through faith which is in Christ Jesus; to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

That solemn address embodies the thought of the religious heart of our nation. So often as in our kingdom's history the occasion recurs, that gift of the Bible on the Coronation day reflects the conviction which, let us pray, will ever animate our people. And yet the words which it contains are as applicable to the humblest of subjects as to the mightiest of monarchs. It is the book of the poor even more than of the rich. To us in our Church it is essentially the book of the People, and the symbol of freedom.

The movement of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, fruitful in many changes, brought as one of its results the free and unfettered use of the Bible in the vernacular.

Incredibly bitter had been the opposition to the

new learning. "By identifying knowledge with heresy, its opponents made orthodoxy synonymous with ignorance." After Wickliffe's death, Archbishop Arundel had decreed that, "No one should hereafter translate any text into English, and that no book of this kind should be read that was composed by John Wickliffe." One hundred and twenty years later William Tyndale's translation had been made and published in the land, whereby he fulfilled the purpose of his life to make the Scriptures as accessible to every ploughboy in the land as to every priest. Tyndale's New Testament was the opening of the gates which could never again be shut. The liberty, that is, the freedom of the use, of the English Bible was won for all time. In some parts of Christendom we have heard of restrictions being imposed upon the freedom of its usage; of permission having to be obtained from Diocesan or Confessor, before the Bible could be read in the vernacular. From that class of hindrance our Church and nation finally shook themselves free more than three centuries ago. The Bible in the language of the people was the first foundation of our religious freedom. All alike are expected to read, and urged to study the Scriptures. All can find for themselves there the message of the Spirit to their hearts.

Critics may succeed critics, scholars scholars; and the commentaries of a bygone day, having

served their generation, will be thrust into the darkest and dustiest shelves.

But there is no favour shown by the Church to one school of thought more than another. There is liberty to read, and liberty of research, and liberty to interpret. Our Church lays down no one rule, either in the definition of Inspiration, or in the interpretation of Scripture.

Now the reason that I have gone over these familiar matters is this. These are the gifts you have received; this is a talent committed to you as Englishmen. The privileges which we have, the liberty in which we stand, are like the air we breathe and the water we drink. We do not realise their preciousness and their value until we pass into some less happy atmosphere, or taste some tainted spring; or compare what *is* with what *was* in the history of our own people. We have passed into a great inheritance: do we show ourselves worthy of the "talents" entrusted to our charge? Wickliffe and Tyndale are honoured in our day, while they were opposed and persecuted during their lifetime. The glories and beauties of our English Version are a boast, a pride, in our day, while every endeavour to promote a faithful translation once met with the bitterest antagonism and loudest ridicule. We call this "progress of thought"; and so it is. Are we to be content with building "the tombs of the prophets"

whom our ancestors ill-treated and persecuted and reviled?

Does the Bible hold the place it should in the life of the nation, or in the lives of the men who are its best hope? Look back upon your experience at school; pass in review your own experience at the University! think of the habits of the ordinary young man or young woman! what is the time they give to the study of Scripture? look round upon the ordinary society of town or country; and consider the popular attitude towards the Bible. What is the commonest verdict expressed by the tone and example of young England? Here is one picture:—Aye, the Bible is held in honour. It is a venerable relic. It is useful educationally. It is an excellent book for children and Sunday School teachers. It is a good book for reading in Church. The clergy should study it; and so should those who are going to be ordained. They should do it for the people; the people cannot be expected to understand. Here is another picture:—Or, it may be that it is regularly read, chapter by chapter, a duty to be discharged, a mechanical, irksome exercise from which it is hoped true profit may be derived—a routine without life, without reason, a duty bravely performed, without purpose, or conviction, or comfort. In West Africa we hear of tribes who take the skulls of brave enemies and

set them up with great honour in sacred buildings; they pay them reverence and offer gifts to them and celebrate dances round them, in order to win from this fetish the inspiration of its courage or its wisdom for the benefit of the whole tribe.

The Bible seems too often to receive treatment like that given to an African fetish. It is a fine thing for the country to possess, and for its priests to venerate. But it does not enter into the life of the individual, or of the family. Men may call it "God's Word," men may describe it as "Divine" and "Inspired"; and so it is—but they repeat but heartless phrases, and empty titles, if they themselves do not turn to the sacred writings with a spirit of real inquiry, with a heart really atune to respond to the call of the Spirit, with a reasonableness that distinguishes reverence from superstition. To profit aright from its pages makes a demand upon a man's powers of thought. God does not deal with us as if we were inanimate machines, propelled by passing emotion or the love of imitation. He speaks to us by the voice of His Holy Spirit; He touches our hearts; He quickens our will; He compels our power of thought, "the mind of man, which is the best part of him." He makes use of the faculties with which we are endowed. The reason of man's heart is the candle of the Lord; the light of God's Word should kindle it. We can neither do nor attempt anything, we

cannot frame a prayer, nor speak a sentence, without an effort, be it small or great, of the reasoning capacities that are part of our nature. "When a man," says Whichcote, "consents to anything that is contrary to the Reason of his own Mind, he begins a disposition contrary to virtue and true religion; a second act increases it."

And this, we cannot doubt, is one cause among many for God's gift to us of the Holy Scriptures. Religious thought needs exercising, feeding, cherishing, widening, and strengthening. The religion of mere ecstasy is apt to spring up quickly and to perish, just because it has no depth of soil. The Divine Literature is given to us for the purpose of deepening and enriching the soil. The Scriptures, with all their wealth of teaching, of example, of precept, have furnished overflowing material for the Christian thought of nineteen centuries. Men of saintly lives like Thomas à Kempis, George Herbert, and Ken, men of science like Newton and Clerk-Maxwell, men of action like Havelock and Gordon, philanthropists like Wilberforce and Shaftesbury, Churchmen of every school, Simeon, Pusey, Arnold, Maurice, Liddon, Lightfoot, have humbly, diligently, prayerfully, steeped themselves in the writings of the Bible. They found there what no other book could supply. They traded with their "talent," and entered enriched into the joy. Can you and I afford to make light of that

which the saints in every age of Christendom found needful for the hunger of their souls? Can you and I neglect the books which seem on almost every page to see everything as in the light of God's presence? Can you and I hope to pass into a yet higher and more glorious field of responsibility, if we neglect, if we bury out of sight, and fail to use the "talent" thus committed to us? "Ah!" perhaps says one, "I scarcely know now what to think. Modern studies seem to have drawn great lines of doubt across the books of Scripture; and therefore I cannot feel sure of their inspiration; and therefore I feel as if the comfort and consolation of them had gone."

Let us be true with ourselves. Not a word is lost, not a page is gone. The comfort you had in Scripture depended not on some cherished point of criticism, some favourite authorship, some traditional date of composition. Nay, the joy you found in Scripture consisted in the message it bore to your spirit. See! there was a narrative written in letters big with meaning for the guidance of your own spiritual course. That Psalm, by David or not, gave utterance to your own hopes and sorrows. That utterance of our Saviour, or that miracle of tender power—wholly apart from vexed problems of Synoptists—has drawn you closer to the Saviour, to the understanding of His infinite love. Is the Prayer Book less of a book of devotion to you when

you learn that some prayers were composed in the fourth century, some in the fifth, some in the sixteenth, some in the seventeenth?

Let not your heart then be troubled. Your faith rests not upon opinions as to the composition of the books, but upon Jesus Christ, to whom the books bear witness. Each step of criticism seems to testify that in more varied ways and through more gradual methods than before were thought conceivable, the Spirit has declared to our spirits the infinite mercies of God in Jesus Christ. Shrink not from calling that inspired which the unbroken experience of Christ's holiest servants has found the source of true inspiration to their own souls. Shrink not from calling that inspired which you find has been a blessing to your soul. What though criticism espies a dozen writers where tradition knows but one? then through a dozen agencies does the Spirit work to summon you to know your Lord. That which is vigilantly to be avoided is the temptation to frame imaginary and indolent pretexts out of the questions of criticism, specious excuses out of the doubtfulness of literary disputation, pretexts and excuses for saving yourselves the trouble and the time of reading and studying Scripture for your souls' good. It is quite possible for you to awake and discover that the Bible is the book you praise the most, and read the least. These new difficulties furnish a perilous

suggestion to the indolent and the indifferent. "Put the Bible on one shelf higher. It is so hard. There is not time enough to think over these things." And so, what is by comparison the shallow or sensational revival address (suited for one phase of thought), or the sentimental and mawkish interjections from some foreign manual of devotional writings (so useful, may be, at the crisis for which they were intended, but so utterly unsatisfying, nay harmful, as the constant food of well-grown manly souls) are apt to drive out the taste for the old Bible, and to take the place of the great Message of the Revelation, conveyed in its many forms.

Let us take heed, that we in England do not bury our talent beneath the mass of the business cares and hurrying turmoil of our time. If we neglect the Bible, it is from our lack of will much more than from our lack of leisure.

Great is the treasure consigned to our keeping. Let us then use it and multiply the possibility of its use. As servants of Christ, as members of our Church, as inheritors in this country of the noblest Biblical teaching of our century, let us give ourselves to the study of the Word. In the Missionary work of the Church of Christ, the Scriptures are a first care. The Englishman may be a poor linguist, a feeble speaker, an unimpressive pleader. And yet in case after case, when he has been able to dis-

tribute the Bible in the language of the people, the good seed has been sown. So marvellously adapted do the Scriptures seem for every age and every clime!

The first effort in every branch of the Missionary field is to secure a translation of the Bible into the language of the people. In this work the British and Foreign Bible Society stands pre-eminent; for its sole object is to facilitate the circulation of the Scriptures throughout the world. It works for all Christians; it typifies the unity of Christendom in the love and reverence for the Word of God. Some of our friends are jealous lest support of this Society should compromise their relations with organisations distinctively connected with our own Church of England. I trust that what I am about to say will go far to allay these apprehensions. The mere fact that the Committee of the Society consists of thirty-six laymen, of whom six are foreigners living in or near London, and that of the remaining thirty, half are members of the Church of England, should commend the cause of the Society to the members of our Communion. And many a man will share the feeling that I have, of great satisfaction that, in the cause of the Bible, we can without a sign of sacrifice of principle work heartily and harmoniously with all Christian Communions in our land.

The British and Foreign Bible Society stands at the back of the Missionary Societies of the world.

Its simple work is the translation and distribution of the Bible in the spoken languages of the world.

There has been much misunderstanding of its place and much groundless distrust of its operation. I am glad therefore that the Secretary for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel recently placed it on record that "in all parts of the world the Bishops and Missionaries are under the greatest obligations to the Bible Society; indeed without such an agency their hands would be tied."

In confirmation of this utterance, I will here repeat to you the striking and straightforward statement made by an eminent Churchman, who in England had not supported the Bible Society, but had come to support it in India. "When you go about India from Mission to Mission, you will find that almost every Mission of the Church of England, whether of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel or the Church Missionary Society, is indebted to the (Bible) Society for its Bibles, and you will find it quite impossible for the Mission to carry on its work without this Society; and to me it is a mere matter of honesty that if our Missions are to receive Bibles with which to do their work, we should support the British and Foreign Bible Society which supplies that great need." This testimony is endorsed by Dr. Jacob[1] in the following striking passage:—"Wherever I went in travelling over the

[1] The present Bishop of St. Albans.

3000 miles of the Diocese of Calcutta, I found that the Missions of the Church were indebted to the British and Foreign Bible Society for their Bibles. I do not believe that the Clergy or Laity understand the extent to which Missionary work is indebted to the Bible Society for the means of circulating the Word of God. Of the whole of the Church Missions throughout the world, quite six-sevenths are exclusively dependent upon the Society for Bibles. There are no less than one hundred languages in which the Church of England at the present moment is conducting its Missions abroad, and for six-sevenths of the Scripture translations used the Church is indebted to the Bible Society alone. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel uses the Bible in many languages, in about half of which the British and Foreign Bible Society alone prints the Word of God. The Church Missionary Society uses the Bible in eighty different languages, and for sixty out of these eighty translations it is indebted to the British and Foreign Bible Society. I cannot now understand how anybody can be a supporter of the Missionary Societies without being a supporter of the Bible Society as well. One of the reasons that led me in old times to think it was unnecessary to support the British and Foreign Bible Society was the idea that the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge covered to a large extent the same ground. I found, however, that it did not do so.

It is enough to say that six-sevenths of the Bibles used by the Missionary Societies can only be obtained from the British and Foreign Bible Society."

It is only necessary to mention, in addition to this, the obligations under which the Universities Mission to Central Africa have been placed by this Society. Bishop Steere's splendid work of translating the Scriptures into the Swahili, having in vain been offered in other quarters, was undertaken by this Society and issued by its supervision. "Our work must be all unsound without a vernacular Bible;" these were the words of Bishop Steere. They express the thought that fired Wickliffe and Tyndale in their splendid labours. They epitomise the principle of the Bible Society.

"I am profoundly convinced," said the great Bishop Thirlwall, "that if ever our theology is to be a moving force in modern life, it will be so exactly in proportion as we draw it from the undimmed fountain of the Bible. Lower down, the stream is turbid, trodden into mire by the hoofs of the unclean beasts of controversy. There, at its source, it sparkles with light of heaven in all its native purity. And he who leads to the pure source rather than to the turbid stream, he who unseals the fountain, he who bids us quench our thirst there, deserves to be had in remembrance as a benefactor of his generation."

The cause of the Bible is the cause of the Christian

Church. "Ignoratio Scripturarum ignoratio Christi est."

You have the gift in your possession. Use it; God has more hereafter for you to do. Possession is not enough. "Occupy," says Christ, "make use of it, until I come." "What is perfected hereafter, must be begun here." Think not to defer that use, until you have settled into the ruts of a profession, or until you are sick and face to face with death. It contains God's Word to men of strength, and men of action, and men of thought.

Be faithful over this which you have received. "Thou hast been faithful over a few things," says my text; "I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

XI

THE BIBLE[1]

"Search the Scriptures: for in them ye think ye have eternal life."
—JOHN v. 39.

WE are here this afternoon to support the cause of the Bible. The cause of the Bible is dear to the heart of every true Englishman. The history of the English Bible is the history of religious liberty in England. Whatever else the Papal Power in England before the Reformation did or did not do, at that epoch it threw every obstacle in the way of translating the Holy Scriptures and of their free circulation among the people.

And whatever else the Reformers did or failed to do in the sixteenth century, they did succeed in causing the Scriptures to be translated into English and to be brought within the reach of the poorest. Again and again they insisted that the Scriptures alone contained all things necessary to salvation;

[1] Preached at All Saints' Church, Northampton, on behalf of the British and Foreign Bible Society, October 20, 1895.

and that therefore it was essential that the Scriptures should be separated in the people's minds from the fables and traditions and legends of the saints, some beautiful, most of them fanciful, some of them unedifying, to which had been given so large a share of mediæval reverence.

Doubtless politics entered largely into the events which determined the ultimate issue of the Reformation movement in England. There is nothing to glory over in the absolutism of Henry VIII. or in the opportunism of Queen Elizabeth.

But it is idle prejudice to deny the spiritual sincerity of purpose of the great men who modelled our English Prayer Book, and who proclaimed to their countrymen that the authority to which they appealed was the revelation of God's Will contained in Holy Scripture. The spiritual control of the Pope they renounced, as being both a usurpation of national liberties and an unwarrantable extension of Episcopal power. A Council they were willing and anxious to have convened, provided that opinion could be freely expressed, and that Scripture was accepted as the test of doctrine, as it had been in the days of the primitive Church.

Holy Scripture was the supreme standard of doctrine. To this the primitive Church had appealed; and to this appeal the English Church, at the Reformation, returned.

This is a matter of importance for us to reflect

upon at the present juncture. We have been publicly and in kindly terms invited to consider the desirability of reunion with Rome. Is it supposed for an instant that Rome will abandon her position and acknowledge what appears to us her error in placing unwritten tradition upon a level with Scripture as a standard of doctrine, and in accepting the infallible utterance of the Pope as a third spiritual authority? Is it to be supposed for an instant that our Church will ever renounce the simple and impregnable position for liberty of conscience and freedom of thought which she has taken up with regard to Holy Scripture: that it contains all things necessary for salvation, and that nothing is to be taught which cannot be proved therefrom? Have we not seen the effect, in the great Roman Church, of the policy of placing upon the same level with Scripture unwritten tradition and Papal Infallibility as standards of Christian doctrine? the invocation of saints, the excessive and advancing degrees of Mariolatry, the whole practice of indulgences, and the crudities of the teaching of transubstantiation; these matters, which enter so deeply into the religious life of our Roman brethren, are repulsive to us, and indeed to all Reformed Churches, in proportion as their adoption is based upon unscriptural authority, and their acceptance is made an indispensable condition of reunion with the Roman system. Bishop Westcott rightly said,

"An outward reunion of the English Church with the Roman Church, as it is now, would postpone indefinitely the reunion of Christendom."

My friends, we will not easily let slip the freedom we have won. Reunion, purchased with the surrender of our liberties, is not reunion, but abject surrender to those who have abated not a jot of their claims, nor withdrawn from a single position, nor admitted an error. Freedom, of course, has its dangers. And many a foolish word has been said, and foolish deed been done, in the name of the right of private judgment and in the cause of liberty of thought. But it is a mere travesty of our position to say that the appeal to Scripture in matters of doctrine, makes every individual his own Pope, independent of the Church and its teaching. That is no private judgment deserving the name of judgment, no freedom of thought deserving the name of thought, which is based on ignorance, or which takes no account of the wisdom of other men or of the teaching of other ages. Fanatics like the Anabaptists have committed wild extravagances in the name of the literal word of Scripture. But neither our own nor the Roman Church has been saved from distorted interpretation of the text, which now we smile at in the old writings of Protestant and Roman alike. "Freedom of thought does not mean the right to accept any novelty of opinion or mad freak of ignorance. Freedom of

thought is only possible where there is freedom of mind, and the mind is only free when it can move freely and smoothly and healthily." No: our appeal to Scripture is an appeal, not, as is sometimes thought, to the mere aggregation of proof texts to be selected for the purpose of overwhelming an adversary, or to be drawn on each occasion as by lot haphazard from the sacred bundle. It is an appeal to Scripture as a whole; to the teaching of the Word as understood by reasonable skilled interpretation, as illustrated by Scripture itself in other passages.

We smile at the allegorising antics, which Patristic exegesis performed, in order to twist favourite doctrines out of the simplest passages. We smile at the ingenuity which forged controversial missiles from the most innocent materials.

We are past the days when Holy Scripture was regarded as a great mass of literary material, of which the larger part is useless, save for the purpose of preserving embedded in it a certain number of "nugget" passages of beauty and force, for exhortation, comfort, or reproof.

It is not a mere repository of controversial weapons, to be hurled at the head of a foe and to be left untouched in time of peace.

God forbid that I should disown the blessing which single texts have brought! The lives of noble men like St. Augustine, like Luther, record

how special texts, like flaming darts, have adhered to the memory and kindled the Divine fire within. God forbid that we should forget the use which our Saviour made of the written Word in the hour of temptation, or in the hour of agony on the Cross! Scripture has a continual message to our hearts. It contains the progressive revelation, the gradual uncovering, the laying bare, of the love of God towards us. It is a long letter, as St. Augustine said, sent from our heavenly home to us. But how many are there among us who are ready to make their boast of their Bible, to make their glory in a Bible-loving land, and yet have never thought of its conveying any message to their own souls! An excellent book, they think, to give as a marriage gift, or as a present to a boy at school, or to a girl going out to service. An excellent book, they think, as a lesson book for children, or as a means of instructing the heathen. An excellent book to read from to the sick and to the bedridden. An excellent book to preach from in the pulpit. And yet what is it to themselves? Do *they* think that they have in Scripture eternal life? What is it to us? Have we really known in our hearts the *message* of the Word? does the *teaching* of Scripture affect our lives? do we hear God's voice speaking in the narratives, in the warnings, in the praises of Scripture, speaking the Gospel of His Kingdom, declaring to us eternal life?

The hypocrisy of glorifying Scripture without recognising its spiritual meaning is to repeat the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees whom our Lord Himself denounced as hypocrites.

Our very familiarity with the Bible adds to the perils of our responsibility. The narratives which it contains are so well known to us from our childhood, that we have hardly thought why they are there, or what they are intended to teach.

But it is clear that they are something more than pretty stories, something more than beautiful prose and passionate verse. Our churches and cathedrals are something more than splendid architecture; our hymns and anthems something more than sweet and entrancing music. So too our Bible; it has not fulfilled its true purpose, if it has appealed only to our taste as lovers of poetry and history and eloquence, if it has not brought our souls into communion with our God, into the presence of His Divine Son. The writings of Scripture stand on a different level from those of Plato, of Dante and Shakespeare, and Bacon, and Milton. We search them for something more than literary beauty and intellectual charm. And why? Far be it from us to disparage the splendid achievements of the world's literary masters. In style and ornament, in eloquence and skill, they may be thought by some to transcend the writers of the Old and New Testament; and who will deny

that they wrote by the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit that enriches the intellect of mankind?

Theirs was a true inspiration of God-given genius. Their work was Divinely ordered. It has ministered to man's higher nature, and lifted him heavenward. But the very thought of comparing theirs with the writings of Holy Scripture reveals to us the inherent difference between them. Both kinds of writing reveal God's wondrous love and wisdom. One kind alone has revealed to us the nature of Eternal Life. While the triumphs of men's literary genius have elevated the intellectual ideals of the world, and have quickened, deepened, and stimulated its moral powers, the glory of Scripture is that it has done more: it has appealed to man's spiritual nature; it has addressed itself absolutely to human life as it stands in the presence of its God. It contains, of course, much more; but this golden thread, this spiritual purpose, runs throughout its narrative, its antiquities, its poetry, its politics. Whether in the account of the Creation, or in the victories of David, or in the downfall of the kingdom, we are taught by historian and by prophet to see God always before us, to seek for Him and to find Him in the universe, in the nation, and in the home, loving righteousness and mercy, hating iniquity. Yet, far above all, is the witness of Scripture to the love of God as manifested in the Life, and as consummated in the Cross, of Christ.

To that supreme end converge the writings of the prophets; from that supreme starting-point rush forth the streams of life-giving thought that run through the writings of the New Testament. Christ is the key to Scripture; He unlocks the mystery of its inspiration. Dark and obscure, if we merely dogmatise upon it with abstract formulæ, it is lit up by the light of the Revelation of the Son of God, though the nature and properties of that inspiring light, we may not be able to define.

The modification by the New Learning of old views upon the structure of the books affects not our fundamental belief. The new light shed upon them by modern scholarship unfolds their manifold human history, and displays to us the unsuspected variety and slow growth of the Sacred Records, which God has ordained for our instruction and our comfort. What though each book has had a varied history of its own? What though the collection of the books was a process of slow evolution? What though criticism can descry its growth, as the geologist explains the strata of the rock or the botanist the rings in the oak? Their message is the same; their power is the same. The discernment of their human growth is no disloyalty to their Divine character. There is still no work like Holy Scripture; still none that speaks to our heart with such a voice. Those that live by it are holy men; they find in it sustenance for their souls, inspiration

for prayer, a means of communing with God. They know that in it they have found eternal life; and their hearts are at rest.

What then is our use of the Bible, in this age when never were Bibles cheaper, better printed, more handy, when never were aids and helps to Bible readers so numerous? Yet, how many of our countrymen never take a copy of the Scriptures in their hands, except to take an oath upon it in a law court.

In how many houses the Bible lies the most dusty book on the shelf; and the old marker remains at the same place where the owner last had a Bible lesson as a boy or girl at school, or in a half-forgotten home! They open it, perhaps, with a start to see their name written in the faded ink which bears the handwriting of a sainted father and mother. What! do they reserve their Bibles for their deathbeds, for the hour of fading sight and failing senses? Any fool could tell that to postpone Bible reading till then is to postpone it for ever. Nay, it is a duty laid upon us by Christian example, by solemn precept, to search the Scriptures, to read, to read with prayer, to read regularly. The idea of regular study, of prayerful meditation upon a book of Scripture, day by day, seems an irksome drudgery in our hurrying days. The Bible claims thought; and the necessity of having to think over the meaning of words, of endeavouring to see the

special application of a passage, seems a task too stern and arduous for those who are accustomed to feed their minds with nothing better than the novels of the railway bookstalls, or the sensational stories of a family newspaper, or the columns of a sporting journal.

Have we not reason for shame in the matter? do we think what it is when we speak of the Bible as God's Word? do we give the reading of our Bibles a fair chance if we never accustom ourselves to any serious reading or sober thought? is the life of threescore years and ten everything, and life eternal nothing? Nay, do we give our souls a fair chance if we starve them in spiritual things, and fail to nourish our religious life with the food of Divine Revelation?

Is life always so clear, and the sky always so bright? Does the night never come, that we should despise the lantern for our feet? Ah! how often has the sun gone down in our sky. No friendly star appears: darkness around: shall we not use the light? Again, our vision is obscured by the smoke and dust of life's conflict. We forget the home of the unseen world, the claim of our spiritual being. The witness of the Cross of Christ, lifted up in the world, is obscured amid the pressure of business and the fierce conflict of competition. The slow methods of devotion are thrust on one side. The drudgery of regular and serious thought we are

too impatient to endure. Material profit fills every hope. The things of this world absorb every aspiration. So we crucify the Lord afresh. And yet Christ had the words of eternal life; and the Scriptures are they that testify of Him. What a change has passed over the land since the day when scholars were labouring to translate the Bible into English! What eagerness then to read! to study! to welcome the New Learning! True, it was an age of superstition. Says Erasmus, speaking in 1540 of relics, "If any displays the robe of Christ or even the footprint of His feet, we are down upon the ground, we adore the spectacle, we cover it with kisses. And yet, though you should produce every vestment that He had, and every piece of furniture in His home, there is nothing that brings Christ back to us so absolutely, so vividly, so unreservedly, as do the writings of the Evangelists or the Apostles." It was as if men said to one another, "Come and let us see Jesus." The cloud of superstition was even then lifting. Men turned from sham miracles and wonder-working images to read the Word of God. The Bibles were chained to the lecterns, that none might carry them away. A continuous throng stood around them, reading and hearing the Scriptures read. The story of the Gospel appealed so freshly and pathetically to the minds that heard too much of mawkish legends and silly inventions.

History repeats itself. Far away in Equatorial

Africa, in the country of Uganda, there is the same hunger to read the Scriptures, the same eagerness to be possessors of the Sacred Book. Love of novelty accounts for something; but the conviction that that book has a message for man's eternal welfare, accounts for much more. And the simple fact that that book contains the life of Jesus, that that book tells the Story of the Cross, that that book relates the Victory over the grave and the Forgiveness of sins, explains for every thinking man, Christian or not, the secret of its imperishable value and its undying force.

Let us not be content with the mere possession of the book. Let us not be content with a mere surface knowledge of the facts narrated in Scripture. Let us not rest until we have found something of the message which it brings to us from God, the message of Eternal Life.

When you see perchance the Bible of some Christian hero, some chosen man of God, a Gordon, a Livingstone, a Ken, a Keble, a Havelock, with what reverence you look upon them! The Bibles of those we have loved, who have gone before us where Bibles are needed not, and now stand in the presence of the Lamb, praising and glorifying—how sacred those Bibles are! how doubly hallowed by holy use and Christian prayer! We know something of the strength those sacred books have imparted, the comfort they have breathed in hours

of grief, the hope they have supplied when the face of the world was blackened with some terrible grief, the prayers they have winged to heaven, the tears of repentance and of peace that have fallen on those pages; you can see where the trembling and the aged hands have found some cherished page, and sought for comfort, hope, and peace; and not in vain.

It is a common thing, let us pray, in Christian homes, to see these Bibles; God grant it may be more common! God grant that our children may grow up knowing more, and reverencing more the sacred volume, because it has the Words of Eternal Life!

For the dispersion of this Book of Books we make our plea. India, China, Africa, the islands of Polynesia, stretch out their hands, and implore you to send this first gift of Christian civilisation. Let England respond liberally to that appeal. You who have realised the blessing of your own Bible, and rejoice in the comfort of the Word, be foremost to send to others the treasures of the Holy Scriptures, for in them ye not only think, but know, ye have found eternal life.

XII

THE OLD TESTAMENT AND MODERN CRITICISM[1]

"The sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."—2 TIMOTHY iii. 15.

THESE words will form a suitable heading to the subject upon which I have been invited to address you this morning. "The sacred writings" which St. Paul here mentions are the Scriptures of the Old Testament. The books of the Old Testament were the Bible of the earliest age of the Church. Before the Gospels were written, before the authority of the Apostolic Epistles was recognised, the sacred books of the Church for public worship and for private study were contained in the Hebrew Canon of Scripture.

The conflict between Jewish and Gentile Christians, of which we find symptoms even in Apostolic writings, brought into prominence in the second century the question of the true position of the Old Testament in the Christian Church. Some Jewish

[1] Preached by request upon this subject, at St. Gabriel's, Warwick Square, July 7, 1889.

Christians, in asserting the permanent obligation of the Mosaic law, apparently went to the extreme of derogating from the efficacy of the Saviour's Life and Work.

Marcion, on the other hand, claimed that the connection of Judaism with Christianity was a source of weakness and corruption to the Christian Church, and contended for the complete exclusion of the Old Testament as the Scripture of a Dispensation that was inferior in character and misleading in teaching.

In maintaining the balance of Christian thought between these two extremes, the great Fathers of the Ancient Church maintained the unity of the Old and New Covenants. They showed that there was no conflict of thought and teaching. They vindicated the vital connection of the Old Testament with the Christian Dispensation. From that time the position of the Old Testament in the Christian Scriptures has never until the present day been seriously called in question.

Unfortunately, the methods adopted by Christian teachers, both patristic and mediæval, for the interpretation of the Old Testament were almost exclusively allegorical and homiletical. Their purpose was to read the New Testament into the Old, and to extract Christian doctrines from pre-Christian writings.

But Divine laws cannot be violated with im-

punity. Purely artificial and non-natural exposition brought its own nemesis. The importance of historical sequence was lost sight of. And by the forcible introduction of the great Christian doctrines into the thought and language of Old Testament writers, the saints and psalmists and prophets of Israel, men failed to discern the gradual progress either of national development or of spiritual revelation.

Many a devout Christian has turned away from the study of the Old Testament books feeling out of sympathy with the arbitrary and artificial methods of interpreting them, and has virtually restricted himself to the writings of the New Testament, where simpler and natural methods sufficed.

Many have reproached themselves because, lacking the adroitness which transfigures the Old Testament pages into parables of the New, they have derived pleasure in reading it only from certain familiar stories, or from isolated passages of comfort or of peculiar literary charm.

Sharp and sudden, however, has been the reaction in recent years, and stern the retribution for past neglect of historical truth. The flood-tide of rationalism has made short work of the barriers raised by traditional methods of ecclesiastical interpretation. Many a man who accepts the teaching and work of Christ is confounded by the strength and force of the criticisms delivered upon the Old

Testament, and congratulates himself that the key to his religious life is to be found in the writings of Evangelists and Apostles, whose authenticity and truth seem capable of withstanding all assaults.

I can recall the words of a clergyman of learning and great ability, which he uttered with characteristic candour and fearlessness: "I cannot understand," he said, "the interest which you and certain others are taking in the questions of the Old Testament. The Jews, like other ancient nations, possessed their prehistoric folk-lore, their legendary history, their poetical and rhetorical literature. But they do not affect our faith. It seems waste of time and energy to occupy yourselves in the discussion of such subjects."

Now compare the position of such a man with that of an ordinary simple-minded devout layman in our Church, who has never read a line on the subject of Biblical criticism, and shuns the occasional mention of it in periodical literature as a matter either beyond his ken or savouring of perilous scepticism. They are as the poles asunder. But both are members of one Church, they have one Lord, one faith, one baptism. Both represent positions with which we can probably have some sympathy. In the matters of faith each man must, in a measure, stand by himself. But, in the matters of our Church, no one, however well read in history or criticism, can afford to treat with contemptuous indifference the place

and significance of the Old Testament Scriptures. No one, again, playing his or her part in the society of modern life, can acquiesce in ignorance of the change that has taken place in the views of competent and Christian scholars respecting the books of the Old Testament.

Christian scholars who strive to keep abreast of the thought and reading of the day have good reason to be startled at the gap, which intervenes between their point of view and that of the ordinary uninstructed and too indifferent Churchman. It cannot but bode grave peril, when such wide differences exist between leaders of Christian thought and the mass of the Christian community, when, for fear of clouding the faith of the simple-minded or of troubling the conscience of the ignorant, good men shrink from declaring in public the results of Biblical criticism. They deem it best policy and truest charity to keep silence upon matters in which a change of opinion is due to arguments unintelligible save to patient and careful students. They deem it kindest not to risk the unity of hearts in essential matters by reference to differences on matters of secondary importance.

Such a state of things cannot last. Christian scholars are bound in some degree to take the whole community into their confidence. What they have to say may be disappointing in the meagreness of results, or distressing in the surrender of preconceived

opinions. But, obviously, it is far better that the rank and file should receive the results of criticism from friends, from brothers in the faith, than from the open assault of the unbeliever, or from the veiled mockery and sarcasm of allusions and hints in the writings of lukewarm allies.

In the first place, there is need of moral courage. If our religion is one of truth, its sacred writings must be capable of standing a truthful investigation. They will not stand us in good stead, if they cannot be submitted to careful cross-examination. Our confidence in them is not worth a rush-light, if we shelter them from the scrutiny of modern science. The time is long past when the advances of criticism were regarded as encroachments upon holy ground. We now recognise that the truest reverence is linked with the truest faith, and that the truest faith is that which invites the freest investigation. The Spirit of Christ, who liveth now, shall guide into truth, and the truth shall make us free.

In the second place there is need of candour and freedom from prejudice. It is strange how many current views on Biblical questions rest upon Jewish and ecclesiastical tradition, for which there was little historical basis. *A priori* assumptions such as that the composition of a work necessarily belongs to the date of the events which it describes, and that the formation of the Scriptures runs parallel with the history of the people, or that books such as Joshua

and Job were necessarily written by those whose names they bore, have for generations deeply moulded the popular conceptions, but cannot stand a moment's critical investigation. Our views of the various books must be based upon the careful study of their contents, not upon views, however venerable, about the manner of their inspiration or the time of their composition. It sounds but a trite thing to say that we must be ready to make concessions, and that many a preconceived idea must be sacrificed. It is, however, necessary to insist upon this, and to convince ourselves that new methods of interpretation must bring altered views of many disputed points. Nor can I be doing wrong in indicating some of the chief changes, which it seems probable that Biblical students must prepare themselves to accept. I have no wish to state them in any way dogmatically; my object is merely to indicate lines of thought which Old Testament criticism has suggested to one whose business it is, in however small a way, to devote himself to its careful study.

(*a*) First, I should place the increased importance which we should assign to the element of compilation in the composition of the various books of the Old Testament. Hardly a single large book in the whole Canon fails to present in some degree an example of this process. Under this head the two most notable examples are the prophet Isaiah and the writings contained in the Pentateuch. Both,

I know well, are controverted points. But on both points, it appears to me certain that the traditional view must be modified. According to modern criticism, the last twenty-six chapters of Isaiah must have been written during or after the Exile, not in the days of Hezekiah; while the Pentateuch contains within itself at least three or four different documents distinguishable by characteristic traits of language and subject matter. In the case of both Isaiah and the Pentateuch, unity of authorship must be abandoned; and in the case of the Pentateuch, although there is no reason to doubt that the separate documents may have been derived from, or based upon, materials, written or oral, composed by, or at the command of, Moses, still the old contention that the Pentateuch, as we have it, is derived from the pen of Moses, will undoubtedly have to be given up.

(*b*) Next in importance seems to be the recognition of the fact that until the last years of the Israelite Monarchy, or until the return from the Exile, the Chosen People had no Sacred Scriptures. The need of the written Word was not realised, until the dispersion of the people and the decay of prophecy. The formation of the Jewish Bible, the collection of the books, and the recognition of their sacred authority, belong to the history of Judaism, not to the history of the Monarchy of Israel. It is when Israel ceases to be one of the independent Kingdoms of the earth, and begins its career as a religious community, as

a dispersed sect, that the Jewish Bible begins its history as a Sacred Canon. It is with the institution of the Synagogue that we are to associate the authoritative use of Scripture in worship. Up to that time the people had appealed to the instruction or Torah, the judgment and statutes, committed to the keeping of priests and prophets, transmitted by writing and by word of mouth from generation to generation. But the appeal to "the book of the law," the appeal to Scripture, is to be connected with the decay and fall of temporal power, and the recognition of Israel's spiritual mission.

(*c*) Thirdly, analysis both of contents and language shows that the composition of many books belongs to a much later date than tradition formally assigned to them. For instance, the careful study of the language induces the majority of modern scholars to see in Ecclesiastes not the writing of a Solomon in the tenth century B.C., but that of an Alexandrian Jew not unacquainted with Greek speculation of the third or fourth century. Others, again, feel convinced that some of the Psalms refer to the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes. Again, it is claimed that the books Daniel and Esther, though based on the materials of more ancient work, derive their present form from the Jewish literature of the second century.

I have specified some of the possible changes of view which Biblical students may have to accept

with respect to the composition, date, and canonical acceptance of some of the Old Testament writings. At the same time I would impress upon you that modern criticism brings with it real gain as well as apparent loss. We learn to appreciate the infinite variety of the sacred writings by which God taught the people from whom His Son was born into the world. We see in them not one type of teaching, but many. Each century left its impress upon the people of God's choice, and bequeathed its influence in the varied record of God's dealings with Israel, God's revelation of Himself. Each book has a history of its own: each result of slow evolution reflects a different aspect of Divine truth. No sacred heritage is destroyed; the new is assimilated to the old, and the existence of both side by side witnesses to the continual work of the Spirit.

What we learn, too, from modern study of other countries, of Egypt, of Babylon, and of Assyria, confirms the truth and accuracy of Scripture records. The more closely we compare them with extant writings of the time, the more reason have we to wonder at the loftiness of tone, the purity of thought, the sobriety of language, the spirituality of devotion which characterise Jewish Scripture.

I have dwelt hitherto upon the literary side of the question, upon the points which easily engage our interest, and too easily provoke contradiction and controversy even among those who have never

really attempted to study the subject. It is because it is so easy to fling an indolent sneer at modern criticism that I have insisted upon the necessity of courage and of candour in the Christian reader. The search for truth always demands moral effort.

But I desire especially to urge that the study of the Old Testament should be directed to the spiritual teaching of the books. The message which they bring far outweighs in importance considerations of date and method of structure. The advance which has been made in our literary acquaintance with the Old Testament does not affect its instruction to Christian readers. It does not touch its significance as the record of Divine revelation, as the witness of Christ's coming, as the preparation for the unveiling of the Divine Presence on earth.

The Old Testament which we have inherited is the same as that which was in the hands of our Lord and His Apostles. The use which they made of them, we are to make of them. Whatever be the secrets of their construction, they are the writings of which our Lord could say, "they testified of Him"; these are "the Moses and the Prophets, which if men believed not, neither would they believe though one rose from the dead." These are the sacred writings which, as St. Paul says in my text, "are able to make thee wise unto salvation": not, you will observe, of themselves, but "through faith which is in Christ Jesus." These were the Scriptures, just

as we have them, which shaped the Judaism from which Christ sprang, and formed the basis of the education of His human intellect. These moulded the character, and permeated the thoughts, of the Apostles themselves; these the Christian Church accepted from the first as an authoritative sacred Canon, as the Rule of Faith and Standard of Teaching.

They have not lost their power because their literary structure is better understood. Their teaching is not affected by altered views of their date and origin. To us, as to our Blessed Lord and to His Apostles, they convey the record of God's dealings with chosen family and nation, of His preparation of a people, so that from them should come the Prince of Peace. They contain the record of His hatred for sin, of His love for holiness, of the mysteries of His wisdom and His power.

I ought, perhaps, before closing, to notice two objections which from experience I know to be constantly raised. The first relates to Inspiration; what view can be held of Inspiration, if we have to adopt some of the theories advocated by Modern Criticism? My reply is that I do not think the subject of Inspiration is as a matter of fact affected. The evidence of their Inspiration is contained in the message of their contents and in the recognition and sanction which they received from our Lord and the Apostles. Whatever be their history or their date

or authorship, these writings tower above the later products of Judaism almost as much as the writings of the New Testament excel in beauty, strength, and character the extant works of the first Fathers of the Church. I grant that if we have strict views upon the precise mode of Inspiration, these may have to be modified. But neither in Scripture, nor from the Church, have we received any clear definition of the manner in which the Inspiration of Scripture was conveyed by the Holy Spirit. In the absence of direct teaching or of direct evidence, our private views upon this mysterious subject can at the best be little more than reverent conjecture. In this only we may feel fairly confident, that we need to shape, and, if necessary, to modify, our views upon the method of Inspiration by what we can learn of the history and teaching of the books. We must not reverse this process. Theories cannot alter facts. But the apprehension of new facts may bring about the change of old theories or the introduction of new ideas. The Scriptures are given to us by Inspiration of the Spirit. Though we cannot see the whole truth, let us turn our eyes in the same direction as the Apostles of old.

The other objection, which I must only very briefly notice, relates especially to the Pentateuchal question. How, it is asked, if the Pentateuch proves to be a late compilation of four or five earlier documents, can we reconcile such a view with the

omniscience and truthfulness of our Lord, who uses such expressions as "Moses for your hardness of heart suffered you to put away your wives" (Matt. xix. 8), and "Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother" (Mark vii. 10); "Did not Moses give you the law?" (John vii. 19).

In reply to this inquiry, it is essential that we should draw a distinction between the final compilation of the Pentateuch and the ultimate source from which its component parts are drawn. The materials which the Pentateuch comprises may have been first derived from Moses and his companions, and there is no reason to doubt that Moses was Israel's first lawgiver, and that from him were derived the foundations of the Israelite constitution. It would be as much a mistake to dissociate his name from the Pentateuch as to assign to his actual pen the present aspect of its contents.

Further, the name of "Moses" was accepted as the impersonation of "the law," as that of David impersonated the Psalter. No one now supposes that David wrote the whole Psalter; but in early times, before historical criticism was known, an appeal to "David" meant a quotation from the Psalter with as much or as little precision as an appeal to "Moses" meant a quotation from the Pentateuch.

Lastly, we should remember that our Lord in His sayings and teaching spoke as a Jew to Jews. In matters of merely human cognisance—such as

history, science, or literary criticism—it is to be noticed that He never claimed superiority over His contemporaries. He never displayed knowledge of facts which could not be possessed by those of His own time. The excellence of His teaching was not an array of new facts. He did not come to save the people by a new policy, by practical inventions, or by literary subtlety. He accepted the knowledge of His day with all its pettiness; but He made it live by the Spirit of His wisdom and power. He took upon Himself all the limitations of our manhood, both in body and in mind. In His moral and spiritual vision He, in His sinless purity, possessed a power of perfect insight; He could read hearts and lay bare thoughts. Into the question of the omniscience of His Divine nature our finite thought cannot enter. But to His intellectual powers in His humanity there seem to have been assigned the natural barriers of the time in which He lived. We should no more be justified in crediting Him with an anticipation of the problems of Modern Criticism, than in expecting to hear from His mouth utterances correcting the imperfect knowledge of His time respecting medicine or astronomy. We do not expect to have divinely revealed to us things at which man's unaided understanding arrives by the exercise of God-given powers. So far then as our Lord's custom can affect us, we cannot be influenced one way or another by His

acceptance and employment of the Jewish tradition of His day. The subjects of His discourses were spiritual and moral, and, in His incidental references to Moses, He adopts the language of the Scribes. The questions of authorship and of composition are outside the range of His teaching as they were outside the investigations of His day.

But in no case, as I said before, either then or now, could the name and authority of Moses be taken away from the substance of the Pentateuch. The questions of the Old Testament, to which our Lord by His example directs us, are those which affect the principles of our daily conduct, and commend its teaching to the hearts of men and women. His use of it should ever recall us to its right use. He has shown that the true seal of its Inspiration lies beyond the reach of controversy upon its date and manner of composition.

In conclusion, let us beware of having our attention to Scripture diverted by merely secondary matters; let us take heed that we are not satisfied with a merely superficial acquaintance with its pages.

Our Lord, after His Resurrection, "beginning from Moses and all the prophets," interpreted to the two disciples in all the Scriptures "the things concerning Himself." Again, we read how, after declaring that "all things must now be fulfilled which are written in the Law of Moses and the prophets and the

Psalms concerning me," He opened the Apostles' minds that they might understand the Scriptures. With such a testimony to their power and worth, we may be assured that their true value does not rest upon the surface; we may be assured, too, that if we prayerfully, studiously, devotionally, and continuously probe their depths, we shall find their power and their comfort in the witness which they bear to Jesus, to Him who came of the Jews according to the flesh, the Saviour of the world.

All too sketchily and scantily I have laid before you some of the aspects of these questions, and the spirit in which we need to meet them. There are many, I believe and hope, who, in our own Church and elsewhere, are devoting their lives to the Christian solution of these problems. Most of us are recognising the necessity—in greater or less degree—of modifying old views and sentiments. But we do not see reason for any doubt as to the ultimate result. The faith in the great Revelation is not shaken, but strengthened, by search for greater accuracy in the literary history of the books of the Bible, and by the discovery of their growth and development. With a good heart and strong confidence we say to you, "Be patient, and be forbearing in your judgment; await the issue of criticism with the spirit of meekness and of prayer. See that for whatever else you look, you seek first in those pages for Christ, and that you find Him in His Word

which liveth and abideth for ever. Pray too for us, who toil in a difficult field, exposed to much misconstruction and suspicion; pray, not for success of this view of man or of that, but for the full enlightenment of the Spirit."

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